


Public Policy Reforms: A Scholarly Perspective on Education 5.0 Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe

Cleophas Gwakwara, University of Johannesburg, South Africa*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3380-4825>

Eric Blanco Niyitunga, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Governments are duty-bound to carry out public policy reforms in a bid to address specific public concerns, needs, and social interests, and stir their economies on sustainable development trajectories. This is done following their constitutional mandates. Zimbabwe has implemented several policy reforms in education, health, housing, finance, agriculture, mining, energy, policing, correctional services, and transport, among others, with varied degrees of success and challenges. These reforms required varied formulation and implementation approaches depending on the objectives and prevailing circumstances. This study gives a scholarly perspective of the public policy reform, 'Education 5.0', on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe, given concerns about the policy from stakeholders. An interview was conducted with a convenient sample of stakeholders. An assortment of documentary evidence was also used to gather secondary data. The study concluded that most of the respondents were satisfied with the policy Education 5.0 in principle.

KEYWORDS

Education 5.0, Primary and Secondary Education, Public Policy, Reforms, Scholarly Perspective, Zimbabwe

This paper aims to provide a scholarly perspective of the public policy reform Education 5.0 and its impact on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe.

Mxenge (2020) defined a policy as the specified posture that an organisation takes with regard to internal and external matters and acts and informs the written foundation for the organisation's actions, regulation, guidelines, and governance. Mxenge further asserted that policies are required to enlighten the public on the government's long-term goal and purpose of government, with the ultimate objective of ensuring that its intentions are geared towards providing solutions to challenges that society faces, upholding the rule of law and entrenchment of democratic ideals.

Public policies refer to the pathway of action that government travels so as to achieve the intended goals or outcomes. Pardhasaradhi (2021) noted that public policy comprises of whatever government decides to do or not to do. The eventual goal of public policies is to bring about transformation that has positive implications to the generality of society. Pardhasaradhi (2021) also advised that, if

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*Corresponding Author

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government is to come up with sound policies, it should ensure that they are in the public interest, effective, dependable, fair/equitable, and insightful of societal/community values. These are some of the issues that the researchers sought to interrogate on the policy Education 5.0.

Ngcaweni (2019) claimed that effective policies can be achieved when they are anchored on a sound vision that is evidence determined, reliable, focused, clear, well communicated, partnered, and supported by properly functioning, well-resourced government institutions, driven by dedicated and innovative staff.

Public policy reforms involve government interventions through its agencies and aimed at effectively addressing specific problems. The government of Zimbabwe is mandated, through the Constitution of 2013, to ensure that citizen welfare is guaranteed. Specifically, Section 75 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013) pronounces the “right to education” as a “fundamental human right and freedom” (p. 37).

Education 5.0 in Zimbabwe came about following the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training of 1999, which recommended that there be a genuine paradigm shift from examination-oriented education to one that emphasises experiential learning and development of desirable traits and competencies (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education [MoPSE], 2015). The reform process which saw the birth of Education 5.0 was embarked on in 2013 (Djeneba et al., 2020).

Education 5.0 is an offshoot of its predecessor Education 3.0, whose inception could be traced to as far back as the second half of the 19th century—the era in which European missionary education got entrenched into the Zimbabwean society (Wuta, 2022). The inception of missionary education coincided with the establishment of Education 3.0 at higher and tertiary levels. Education 3.0 is an instructional regime which focuses primarily on the three aspects namely “teaching,” “research,” and “community service/ outreach” (Wuta, 2022, p. 26).

According to Murwira (2019), the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science, and Technology Development, Education 3.0 took a colonial thrust, mainly focused on moulding workers and not innovators. Murwira further argues that although Africa emphasised mass University Education, it did not yield the expected outcomes, such as industrialisation due to its inclination to the Education 3.0 design.

Therefore, Education 3.0 was in place throughout the colonial era, as it had been just designed to feed employees into the existing colonial industries and economic system. It unfolded until recently, when the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science, and Technology Development added two pillars to those in Education 3.0, giving rise to a new model of instruction that has five missions, namely teaching, research, outreach, innovation, and industrialisation (Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science, and Technology Development, 2018). Given the five missions, this new instructional system is dubbed Education 5.0.

The underlying principle of Education 5.0, as a scientific and developmental doctrine, is that education does not produce goods and services (Government of Zimbabwe, n.d.). Consequently, Education 5.0 has gained traction at Zimbabwe’s higher and tertiary education levels. Maringehosi’s (2020) study to evaluate the efficacy of Education 5.0 in improving modernisation and automation in Zimbabwe revealed that Education 5.0 was equipping students with appropriate hands-on skills, apart from learning theory positioning them for job creation, innovation, and industrialisation, and recommended that government provided the requisite technical and nontechnical infrastructure for effective execution of the policy.

Wuta (2022) found that there was solid compatibility between the policy Education 5.0 and the Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, and therefore, envisaged the possibility of extending Education 5.0 to Zimbabwe’s secondary education cycle, for a start, thus increasing the likelihood of its success at higher and tertiary educational levels.

Alharbi (2023) conducted a comparative study on the implementation of the policy Education 5.0 in developed and developing countries, and specifically chose Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka in its

developing countries segment. This author found that there is a great necessity for revisiting the existing situations on the implementation of Education 5.0 in emerging states.

Muzira and Muzira (2020) evaluated educators' level of anxiety on the adoption of Education 5.0, using a case of one university in Zimbabwe. They showed that educators were more concerned about how Education 5.0 would have personally affected them and least worried about the task (i.e., Education 5.0) at hand. Keche et al. (2022) conducted a similar study in which they sought to assess the challenges tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe encountered towards the implementation of Education 5.0, in the year 2020. These researchers used a case of Chinhoyi University of Technology and revealed that tertiary and higher education and training in Zimbabwe is politicised, lacks sufficient stakeholder involvement by the government, and is not adequately resourced.

Further, reports in the media, as well as sentiments expressed by some learners, parents, teachers, and teacher unions, point to some misgivings regarding the policy Education 5.0 in Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, studies on Education 5.0 have tended to focus primarily on tertiary institutions. Consequently, literature on Education 5.0 as it manifests at primary and secondary education levels is lacking. The scarcity of scholarly work on Education 5.0 at primary and secondary education levels is not unique to Zimbabwe; it is prevalent in most parts of Africa. The limited literature on Education 5.0 at primary and secondary education levels hampers a comprehensive understanding of its various facets in Zimbabwe. The available information is fragmented and does not give a clear picture of this public policy reform. Therefore, this paper is, an attempt to bridge the gap in knowledge by providing evidence on how stakeholders perceive the impact of the policy reform Education 5.0 on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe. The primary objective of the paper, which is mainly based on Grindle and Thomas's (1991) linear model, is to provide an empirically backed standpoint on stakeholders' perception on whether or not Education 5.0 impacts on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe in terms of the importance, process, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do stakeholders perceive the public policy reform of Education 5.0 on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe?
2. What are the challenges the government encountered in the implementation of the public policy reform Education 5.0 in primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe?

The findings of the study are thus of importance to the policymakers, as they identify some of the stakeholder perceived challenges regarding the policy of Education 5.0 on primary and secondary education and how these can be addressed.

In terms of organisation, the paper commences with an introduction which incorporates the background of the study, thus setting the scene for further discussions. The second section provides a review of relevant literature. The third section offers the theoretical considerations for the study; they include an exposition of the linear model, which serves as the guiding theory for the study. The fourth section illustrates the research methodology, research methods, and their use. The fifth section presents the findings from empirical evidence, which the authors then discuss in the sixth section. Finally, based on the evidence and analysis in the foregoing sections, in the sixth and last section the authors draw conclusions and provide recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Palier and Surel (2005) stated that three important essentials can bring about changes in policies: Institutions (processes, context), interests (actors, power), and ideas (content, evidence, and values); which they have referred to as the "3Is." These influences affect each stage of the process, from agenda setting to the identification of alternatives, weighing up the options, choosing the most favourable, and implementing them.

The policy process is influenced by a range of interest groups and actors that exert power and authority over policy-making. Literature shows that education is taking shape in environments that are progressively intricate, which ultimately determines the way contemporary education systems are administered (Burns, Koster and Fuster, 2016). In addition, education systems are moving from fundamentally top-down systems to more flat exchanges in which cooperation and construction are the norm. To this end, scholars on reforming education posit that, unless teachers, school leaders, and other actors in education comprehend and embrace the significance of the policy, it is not likely to get implemented (Fullan, 2015).

Think tanks have also been found to influence the policymaking process. According to McGann (2011), think tanks are institutions that help policymakers or the public at large with advice on issues that may be domestic or international after having carried out investigations, scrutiny, and engagement. McGann further asserted that think tanks could also be viewed as policy actors in their own right or special interest groups who help to entrench democratic values of pluralism, openness, and accountability.

Public policy reforms usually encounter hitches. Difficulties that could be encountered in implementing educational policy include organisation matters, shortage of organisational resources, actors' capacity or resistance to the reforms (Viennet & Pont, 2017), communication, dimensions and amenability of the policy operatives and policy goals (Weaver, 2010), lack of vision, or failure to strike the right balance between marginal changes and structural transformations (Keller & Price, 2011). Similarly, a study on restructuring public sector activities revealed that there is a deep-rooted practice for the education segment to stick to the status quo and resist transformation in many countries (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2017). This is largely due to stakeholders preferring to go by the status quo for fear of footing the costs associated with reforms and the shroud of uncertainty on the results (OECD, 2016).

Hess (2013) asserted that there is vast distance between policy and practice. Educational policies are often crafted with little regard to the implementation matrix, for example, the teachers' skills set and readiness to deliver on the policies (Viennet & Pont, 2017). This often results in the ability of schools to implement the educational policies being overstated (OECD, 2010), with consequent poor outcomes.

Corruption, which is a cankerworm in the implementation stage of public policies, must be confronted headlong. In Nigeria, it is generally believed that most of their current policies are good, but implementation is sadly poor because of the hydra-headed problem of dishonesty (Popoola, 2016).

The environment in which policies are operationalised is dynamic and shrouded in uncertainty. The policies, therefore, need to be constantly monitored and appraised to check on whether or not they are still on the desired course that would ultimately lead to the achievement of the set goals and outcomes. Popoola (2016) argued that policy evaluation is fundamental, as policies need to be reviewed and fine-tuned periodically to ensure that they remain relevant and useful in solving the problems for which they were formulated, as well as emerging challenges.

In practice, policy evaluation presents numerous challenges to the evaluators. Citizens and governments alike tend to interpret the actual effects of a policy to serve their intentions. Often, governments avoid the precise definition of policy objectives because, otherwise, politicians would risk taking the blame for obvious failure (Werner & Wegrich, 2006). Further, policy decisions cannot be limited to intended effects only. An additional problem stems from the time horizon:

Program circumstances and activities may change during the course of an evaluation, appropriate balance must be found between scientific and pragmatic considerations in the evaluation design, and the wide diversity of perspectives and approaches in the evaluation field provides little firm guidance about how best to proceed with an evaluation. (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004, p. 29)

As to the authors mentioned earlier, Education 5.0 in Zimbabwe came about following the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training, in 1999, which recommended that there be a genuine paradigm shift from examination-oriented education to one that emphasises experiential learning and development of desirable traits and competences (MoPSE, 2015).

Observations on the Zimbabwe education system, prior to 2015, were that summative assessments do not adequately assess all learner competencies, since they are largely pen-and-paper examinations administered at the end of a course or learning period. In addition, summative assessments have been observed to have a negative backwash effect in that teachers teach for the test, ignoring fundamental skills and competencies that learners need. In this 21st century, the idea is to have a top-notch assessment model whose measurement outcomes truly represent a person's competencies, knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes (MoPSE, 2015).

Education 5.0 curriculum frameworks take a holistic approach to assessment, which entails assessing learner competencies on a continuum that includes knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and traits indicating what learners can and become (MoPSE, 2015). Learners, at every level, from Early Childhood Development to Form 6, are profiled from the day they enter the school system up to when they exit.

Profiling learners at various levels is aimed at developing balanced learners who are inquisitive, knowledgeable, critical thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, and reflective risk-takers (MoPSE, 2015).

Maringehosi (2020) asserted that Education 5.0 is about producing outcome-based education anchored on problem solving through novelty and industrialisation. This view is echoed by Mwanyisa (2022) who notes that Education 5.0 is a heritage-based model that seeks to impart in learners skills to think critically, creatively and innovatively, resulting in industrial solutions that could propel the economy towards achieving the envisaged Vision 2030. In other words, it is a student involvement model that seeks to create solutions for the country through nurturing problem-solving skills in students, as early as primary and secondary levels, so that this will eventually support university industrial innovation initiatives that impact the national economy.

Education 5.0 enables rich, cross-institutional, and cross-cultural educational opportunities within which learners themselves play a major role as creators of knowledge artefacts that are shared and where social networking and social benefits outside the immediate scope of activity play a strong role (Keche, 2021).

Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 curriculum emphasises learners' acquisition of information and communication technology (ICT) knowledge and skills from elementary, junior, and secondary to tertiary levels, among other competencies. This positions them to be able to exploit the rapid developments and advancements in the ICT sector, to solve problems that affect their day-to-day lives as well as making contributions to the wealth of their country. Online communication in schools and tertiary institutions, that was a common feature during the Covid-19 pandemic, needs to be enhanced as it provides choice, convenience, and greater geographical coverage.

Education 5.0 curriculum could incorporate the use of virtual reality (VR) as a learning tool to improve outcomes, particularly in the learning of science, maths, social sciences, and art, at elementary levels. VR is a know-how that enables operators to entirely experience simulated surroundings using headsets or other gadgets as if they were actual (Lara-Acarez et al., 2023). VR has a strong and positive influence on educational outcomes (Amores-Valencia et al., 2023; Yu, 2021), with students assigning more consideration, having advanced feelings of attendance, and exhibiting more satisfaction (Huang et al., 2019), despite apprehensions on its clarity in the learning of mathematics (Cevikbas, Bulut and Kaiser, 2023), and negative effects on anxiety, cognition, creativeness, gender differences, learning attitudes, learner satisfaction, and engagement (Yu, 2021).

Similarly, studies conducted on augmented reality (AR), a current digital innovation that has widely been adopted in the education sector because of its ability to improve learning outcomes, evidenced that AR could possibly be incorporated into Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 ICT strategy, so

as to achieve similar outcomes. AR refers to know-hows that increase the sense of truth, allowing the coexistence of digital information and real environments (Özeren & Top, 2023; Yen et al., 2013). When students navigate, see, and relate with selected virtual items, generated by AR, from diverse standpoints, their ability to view things from three dimensions and comprehend abstract concepts improves (De Serio et al., 2013). AR-assisted instruction makes students more attentive, involved in learning tasks, confident (Faria & Miranda, 2023), creative, and motivated (Özeren & Top, 2023). Students that are confident, attentive, and actively involved tend to perform better in educational assignments. AR also improves attitudes of learners, resulting in increased learning accomplishments, in comparison to the old-style method (Carbonell Carrera & Bermejo Asensio, 2017; Christopoulos et al., 2021; Wenwen & Yu, 2023; Zhonggen, 2023).

Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 could also take a leaf from digital developments in Russia, where mobile learning (m-learning) has had some traction and making positive impacts on educational outcomes. M-learning motivates the learners to increase their knowledge base, resulting in significant improvement in their outcomes (Demir & Akpinar, 2018; Sizova et al., 2020). Infographics (2014) noted that m-learning makes the learning process flexible, convenient, and appropriate, given that most learners possess smartphones. However, in developing countries, due to economic limitations, most learners do not possess smart phones, which could make the implementation of m-learning difficult.

Yu et al.'s (2022) study revealed that English delivered through m-learning significantly improved students' motivation, learning strategies, and learning outcomes, as compared to English learnt using traditional methods.

The Community of Inquiry (CoI), where students can resolve learning difficulties or approach problematic matters through inquiries (Yu & Ming, 2022) during online learning, is important and could help in ensuring that Education 5.0 allows to implement focused strategies for the successful achievement of its ICT objectives. Yu and Ming came to the conclusion that "teaching presence, social presence, cognitive presence, metacognition, and self-efficacy played important roles in the framework of CoI" (p.1). The teachers and students, and policymakers, therefore, need to change their mindset and embrace CoI main concepts for optimal delivery.

Although it is appreciated that m-learning could provide some improvements in educational outcomes, some scholars argue that m-learning does not seek to substitute classroom learning, but offers means to complement learning outside of the classroom and bring benefits for diverse exchanges (Sharples et al., 2010).

Challenges associated with the use of mobile phones in m-learning include limited physical characteristics compared to the personal computer, affordability, distraction, poor network connectivity, and unreasonable bans in some schools (Kalpana, 2020).

It is common cause that teachers are an important factor in the delivery of online content equation. To this end, Yu (2021) asserted that teachers should be competent in using online communication technologies, so that they can transmit knowledge to scholars as well as interact with them online or through a blended system. The training of teachers needs to include acquisition of ICT skills, so that they can competently handle Education 5.0 deliverables.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are different approaches to public policy reforms. Two approaches that could be used to view public reforms are the class analytic models and the pluralist (group theory) models. Class analytic models are based on the Marxist approach which argues that the policy process is influenced by opinions that divide along class lines, with the elites controlling policy choices and decisions without inputs from the indifferent and poorly informed masses (California State University Long Beach, 2002). According to the pluralist (group theory) model, public policy reforms are a function of the group struggles and reflect the balance reached by the competing parties, through alliances, concessions,

exchanging favours, and conflicts, at any given time (Anyebe, 2018). Government, therefore, needs to provide an environment that allows these contending factions to shape policy reforms.

The authors chose the linear model (Grindle & Thomas, 1991) as the theoretical framework for the paper. The authors preferred the linear model to investigate the policy reform Education 5.0 in primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe since it allows to gain insights into some of the key constructs in public policy reform, which include reform issues, agenda setting, decision making, and implementation. The linear model outlines policy-making as a problem-solving process which is balanced, stable, unbiased, and critical (Grindle & Thomas, 1991). In the model (Figure 1), decisions are made in a series of sequential phases, starting with policy formulation, followed by policy adoption, policy implementation, and, finally, policy evaluation (Mxenge, 2020).

According to Torjman (2005), a policy decision, from a theoretical perspective, is arrived at after a rigorous process that encompasses consideration and selection of the option(s) that best achieves the desired outcome. In contrast to this, Anyebe (2018) remarked that literature on rational choice of policy making points to the process making being inflexible with narrow assumptions that are not in sync with reality.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Study Area

The authors carried out this study in Harare (Figure 2), which is located in the north eastern part of Zimbabwe, in Mashonaland East province, with a focus on assessing the public policy reform of Education 5.0 on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe.

The 2022 MoPSE Statistics Report revealed that Harare province had a school-age population (3-18 years) of 784,953, 537 primary schools, and 319 secondary schools. Of the 537 primary schools, 338 were registered, 4 satellite, and 195 unregistered. As for the 319 secondary schools, 284 were registered, 6 satellite, and 29 unregistered (Thabela, 2022). The number of unregistered schools is cause for concern as such institutions' operational standards are not subjected to Ministerial supervision

Figure 1. The policy making cycle (Mxenge, 2020, p. 13)

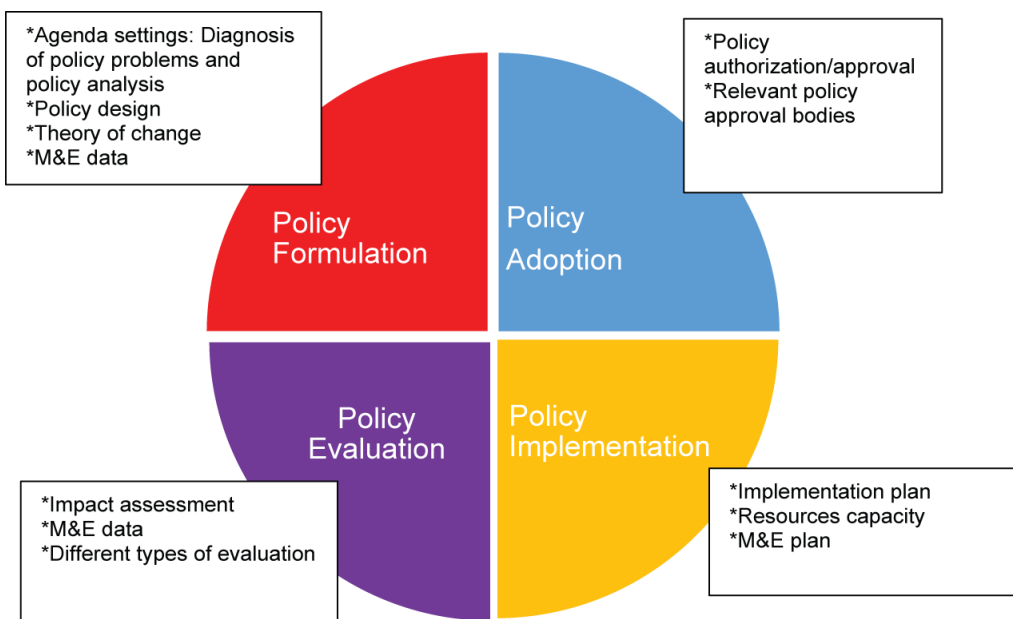
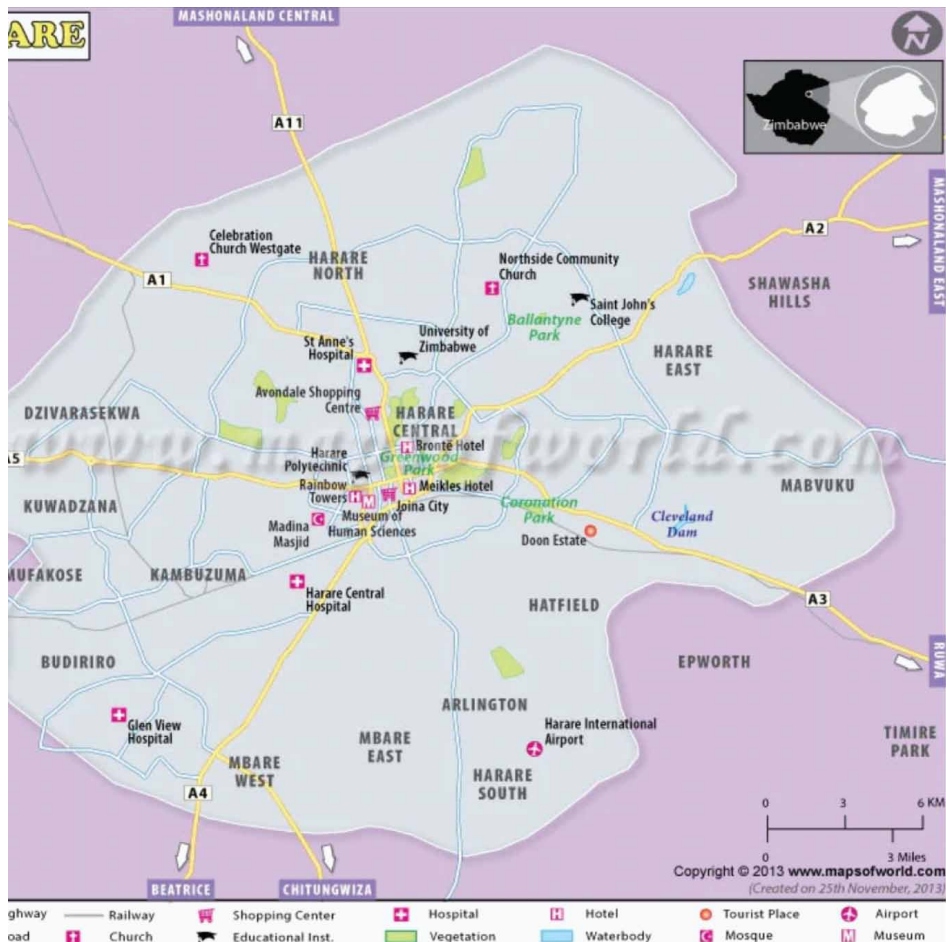


Figure 2. Map of Harare (Mapsofworld, 2013)



and guidelines, resulting in learners being short changed. In 2022, the primary school enrolment in Harare was 336,084, while the enrolment in secondary schools stood at 144,112 (Thabela, 2022). The abovementioned school age population of 784,953 and the total enrolment of 480,196 pupils for both primary and secondary levels, in the same year, show that 304,757 children of school-going age were not enrolled. This scenario calls for the policy makers to come up with policy reforms that address such gaps. Table 1 shows the teacher establishment in Harare’s schools.

The overall staffing establishment in Harare’s schools was favourable and would help to drive educational policy reforms. In this study, the target population were teachers, learners, college

Table 1. The teacher establishment in harare schools (MoPSE, 2022)

Level	Trained	Untrained	Grand Total	Trained (%)
Early Childhood Development	1 667	337	2 004	83.18
Primary	8 483	275	8 758	96.86
Secondary	5 814	931	6 745	86.2

lecturers, representatives of Teachers' Unions, School Development Committee members, Members of Parliament), and parents in Harare. The authors could not reach the whole targeted population due to time and financial limitations. Besides, given the varied nature of the population, they could not come up with the precise size of the population, thus the authors employed nonprobability sampling method, drawing on Kabajulizi (2019) and Kumar (2011).

Research Philosophy

The phenomenological philosophy guided the study. The phenomenological viewpoint focuses on the interpretation and description of people's experiences (Ryan, 2018). The authors chose this philosophy because it enabled them to gather, describe, and make inferences on stakeholders' experiences regarding Education 5.0 policy reform in Zimbabwe. The researchers used the qualitative approach, which enables exploration of a phenomenon within its setting by means of diverse data sources. The justification was that the approach meshes well with the objective of the study, which was presenting a scholarly perspective on Education 5.0 policy reform at primary and secondary levels in Zimbabwe.

Research Design

With the qualitative approach, the researchers used the case study strategy. According to Coombs (2022) the case study strategy is a procedural research method to produce a detailed understanding of a current issue or phenomenon in a restricted system. The authors' motivation for using the case study was that it facilitates an in-depth consideration of the specific area being investigated. They found descriptive design to be suitable to the study. Calderon (2006) reinforced the use of descriptive research as a purposive process of gathering, analysing, classifying, and tabulating data about prevailing conditions, practices, processes, trends, and cause-effect relationships and then making adequate and accurate interpretation about such data with or without or sometimes minimal aid of statistical methods. Besides, research on effects of Education 5.0 policy reform on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe has remained scarce, as most researches focused on effects of Education 5.0 at tertiary level. This justified the use of descriptive research design.

Sampling Strategy and Sample Size

In this study, the authors used a nonprobability sampling technique. This method of sampling allows to employ the convenience selection procedure to choose the research participants. Showkat and Parveen (2017) asserted that two of the benefits of using the convenience sampling method are accessibility and availability of participants. The authors used the convenience sampling method to engage 11 stakeholders, comprising teachers, learners, college lecturers, representatives of Teachers' Unions, School Development Committee member, Members of Parliament, and parents in Harare, Zimbabwe. The researchers ensured that there was gender balance in the sample so as to capture views of women, who are usually ignored in patriarchal setups, as is the case in Zimbabwe.

Data Collection

To achieve the goal of the study, the researchers gathered primary and secondary data through document reviews and semistructured interviews from a nonprobability and convenient sample in Harare. The researchers found document reviews to be reliable, adequate, and appropriate for their research (Kothari, 2004), easy to access and also inexpensive to obtain (OpenLearn, 2023). The justification for using semi structured interviews was to involve participants and gather their viewpoints about the policy reform Education 5.0. Ultimately, the data they gathered would bring in the human factor to the area under study, thus helping in successfully addressing the research questions and objectives. Then, the authors analysed the data using the thematic method. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) likened qualitative data analysis to the process of finalising a jigsaw puzzle, in which the pieces represent data and the associations amongst them help researchers

in fashioning their picture and understanding of what the data are telling them. The authors' motivation for using the thematic method of analysing data was that it helps to methodically organise and scrutinise intricate sets of data by searching for themes that can capture narratives available (Dawadi,2020).

FINDINGS FROM EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

This section provides a summary of the authors' key findings in this study. In this research, they critiqued the public policy reform of Education 5.0 on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe in terms of stakeholders' perception on the process, its usefulness, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. In other words, the authors had an interest in finding out how the stakeholders construed each of the above-stated constructs on Education 5.0. Before presenting key findings, however, the authors will attempt to contextualise Education 5.0 in terms of the political socioeconomic dynamics.

Contextualising Education 5.0 in Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe

Mukonza et al. (2016) reported that Zimbabwe had undergone a period of political turbulence since the turn of the century. They further noted that the political challenges the country had faced have resulted in significant socioeconomic challenges, including increased closure of companies, increased rate of employment, increased poverty levels, and massive emigration. In addition, the economic decline resulted in governmental bodies having limited financial resources. This, overall, has constrained spending on Education 5.0 on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe.

Stakeholders' Perception on the Public Policy Reform Education 5.0 on Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe

The majority of the participants in this study stated that they were aware of the public policy reform 5.0 on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe. They were also of the view that Education 5.0 on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe was a useful policy, with participant 2, secondary school teacher, remarking that "it is a good idea," though "too ambitious and not well thought out." Participant 1 (primary school teacher) was quite emphatic that the policy was "a noble idea," and participant 4 (primary school learner) concurred that "it is a good policy." Participant 6 (Teachers' Union representative) remarked that "Education 5.0 was a progressive policy." Elaborating, participant 3 (secondary school learner) felt that "it enhances chances of passing as some of my marks (30%) come from Continuous Assessment Learning Activity (CALA)." The participants also felt that Education 5.0 allowed learners to research, with participant 3 expressing that the policy "goes beyond things done at school." Participant 1 (primary school teacher) also felt the policy allowed learners to "consult and research on tasks through CALA."

Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the Public Policy Reform Education 5.0 in Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe

Most participants cited the major challenge that learners have in accessing Internet sources for researching their Education 5.0 tasks. It is trite to point out that some areas did not have Internet access, particularly in the rural areas, while inhibitive data costs compounded the problem. Participant 4 (primary school learner) cited "lack of data for research" as a challenge to their learning, due to the policy reform Education 5.0. Participant 1 (primary school teacher) echoed this and cited "financial challenges to download what is being asked." Participant 6 (Teachers' Union representative) felt that "some areas, notably rural areas, do not have ready access to the Internet for learners to do their researches as required by the policy Education 5.0, as compared to their urban counterparts, thus creating inequities."

Participants also felt that Education 5.0 tended to overload the curriculum. Participant 2 (secondary school teacher) opined that “the curriculum is too wide and too burdensome to teacher-pupil ratio.” Similar sentiments also came from participant 11 (university lecturer), who said that “the policy demands too much from people who are under-resourced and demotivated.” Participant 6 (Teachers’ Union representative) was also of the view that the policy was “time-consuming and not properly structured to suit the levels of learners.”

Further, the participants felt that some of the CALA tasks that were given to the learners as were beyond the scope of the learners, resulting in the students contracting other people to do the tasks on their behalf for a fee. This came out from the response of participant 4 (primary school learner), who affirmed that “some of the tasks are too difficult for us,” with participant 5 (parent) saying that “some parents pay teachers to do the tasks for their children, as they are too difficult.” Participant 7 (a School Development Committee member) concurred that “tasks are too many and difficult; some learners ask other people to do the tasks for them for payment.” Participant 5 (parent) expressed the same view, saying that “tasks for learners are too many and difficult”. In addition, participant 6 (Teachers’ Union representative) was of the view that “Education 5.0 CALA tasks are not appropriately structured to suit the levels of the learners.”

The study also evidenced a disconnect between Education 5.0 and its predecessor Education 3.0. Participant 2 (secondary school teacher) felt that “Education 5.0 does not quite link with its predecessor (Education 3.0).”

Suggestions for Improvements to the Policy Education 5.0 in Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe

Participants proffered varied suggestions on how the policy Education 5.0 in primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe could be improved. Participant 2 (secondary school teacher) suggested that students should be requested to do one CALA task, though this participant did not specify whether this should be for one subject or not. Participant 3 (secondary school learner), too, indicated the need for a reduction of the practical tasks the new policy of Education 5.0 requires: “Decrease the number of practical activities from five to three.” Participant 2 (secondary school teacher) further suggested “training for teachers and item writers,” as implementers of Education 5.0 through its CALA model, would go a long way in improving the implementation of the policy. On a similar note, Participant 11 (university lecturer) pointed out the need to “improve the morale of the teachers,” as this is among the drivers to the success of the policy. Participant 1 (primary school teacher) felt “tasks that are given to learners should be based on what is contained in their textbooks,” as some do not have access to the Internet. Participant 4 as well mentioned the element of cost (primary school learner), saying “provide learners’ guides for free.” This would ensure that there is equal access to the study materials, as some of the learners’ parents may not afford the cost involved. Participant 6 (Teachers’ Union representative) suggested “going back to the drawing board to address concerns from stakeholders.”

DISCUSSION

The authors examined the study’s primary data using the thematic technique of data analysis, where they used several codes to recognise themes from the study results. They asked the participants to provide their insights on the policy reform Education 5.0 on primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe, and the following subthemes emerged.

Policy

The study revealed that Education 5.0, in Zimbabwe, was a policy in the right direction, with the majority of participants expressing awareness of the policy, which agrees with the sentiments Luetjens et al. (2019) expressed on the importance of good-quality information and evidence in ensuring

successful policy development. In addition, some respondents felt that the policy was good, noble, and progressive, as it allowed learners to consult and research on tasks assigned, and also enhanced learners' chances of obtaining good grades in their final examinations. This finding is supported by Maringehosi (2020) who asserted that Education 5.0 is about producing outcome-based education anchored on problem solving through novelty and industrialisation..

Scope

The study findings also revealed that some of the tasks that were given to learners as the policy Education 5.0 required were beyond the scope of the learners, resulting in the students asking other people to do these assignments on their behalf for a fee. In addition, the findings showed that the curriculum was overloaded with the CALA tasks. This could possibly be as a result of policy makers not doing enough research as to what should or should not be included in the policy reform. The use of think tanks could have helped in bringing expertise that would have helped in crafting meaningful policy reform strategies.

Significance

The findings of the study showed that Education 5.0 sought to inculcate research and innovation skills and values in pupils, which would ultimately position these students for the dynamic and research focused job market. This finding is supported by Kumari (2021), who asserted that Education 5.0 is about transforming the present education system into action/outcome-based systems. Maringehosi (2020), lending support, stated that Education 5.0 is about producing outcome-based education anchored on problem solving through novelty and industrialisation.

Implementation Environment

Further, the study evidenced that the policy Education 5.0 was implemented without due regard to the prevailing enabling factors in Zimbabwe on teachers', item writers', and learners' capacity, motivation, resource availability, Internet access, data connectivity, learners' comprehension levels, and curriculum depth and spread. This agrees with Viennet and Pont's (2017) assertion that difficulties that could be encountered in implementing an educational policy include organisation matters, shortage of organisational resources, actors' capacity or resistance to the reforms. Shortage of resources in the implementation of Education 5.0 in Zimbabwe is also supported by Keche et al., (2022), who pointed out that the implementation of Education 5.0 in tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe was not adequately resourced.

Hess (2013) asserted that there is vast distance between policy and practice. Educational policies are often crafted with little regard to the implementation matrix, for example, the teachers' skills set and readiness to deliver on the policies (Viennet & Pont, 2017). This often results in the ability of schools to implement the educational policies being overstated (OECD, 2010), with consequent poor outcomes. These remarks support the study findings, which showed that teachers' and learners' digital skills in Zimbabwe were low, and this negatively impacted on the success of the policy reform Education 5.0.

Strategy

The research established that the policy Education 5.0 was perceived as ambitious and did not quite link with its predecessor (Education 3.0). The perceived disconnect between the policy reform Education 5.0 and its predecessor Education 3.0 could be as a result of the participants lacking sufficient technical knowledge on the policy reform. This disconnect between Education 5.0 and its predecessor (Education 3.0) differs from Lindholm's view on the incrementalist model of policy change that emphasises that policies tend to be only marginally different from those that have gone before (Sutton, 1999).

Communication

Luetjens et al. (2019) emphasised the importance of good-quality information and evidence in ensuring successful policy development. The study findings pointed to most stakeholders being aware of the policy reform from Education 3.0 to Education 5.0. This reflects positively on the MoPSE as the implementers of the policy reforms. The MoPSE must have gone all out to consult and feedback on the policy reform to stakeholders.

Resources

Most participants cited Internet access by learners, to research as the policy Education 5.0 required, as a major challenge. It is trite to point out that some areas did not have Internet access, particularly in the rural areas, while inhibitive data costs compounded the problem. This finding agrees with Keche et al. (2022), who noted that the implementation of Education 5.0 in tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe was not adequately resourced.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study provided pertinent insights that could be useful to policy makers in order to improve the content, context, and implementation matrix for the policy Education 5.0.

Firstly, the thrust of the policy reform Education 5.0 was lauded as a good policy, as it seeks to inculcate research and industrialisation skills in learners. It prepares them for the dynamic job market, which demands job creators, rather than job seekers.

Secondly, the stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the communication relating to the policy change from Education 3.0 to Education 5.0. Policy makers need to continue on such a path, as information dissemination can make or break the policy initiative.

Thirdly, the Education 5.0 incorporates continuous assessment of the learners' performance in their final examination grading, which tends to give a better picture of the learners' performance, rather than concentrating on grades obtained in final written examinations only, as it happened in the preceding policy Education 3.0.

Fourthly, policy makers need to take heed of the negative sentiments stakeholders expressed on the disconnect between Education 3.0 and Education 5.0, overload and inappropriate CALA tasks, disparities in Internet connectivity between rural and urban areas, inhibitive data costs countrywide, power disruptions, low teachers' morale, and resource materials shortages. These tend to reduce the gains that could be achieved from the policy changes.

CONCLUSION

Despite the limitations of time and financial resources, the findings in this study point to the conclusion that the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the policy Education 5.0, in principle, and the way it was communicated to stakeholders. It is a good, noble, and progressive policy that allows learners to carry out consultations and research on tasks assigned, ultimately enhancing learners' chances of obtaining better grades in their final examinations. However, there were misgivings about its link with its predecessor, Education 3.0. Teachers' and item writers' capacity falls short. There is low readiness and morale of teachers, due to high workloads and constrained resource availability. The intermittent Internet access and data connectivity, coupled with prohibitive data costs, pose challenges to the learners. In addition, the quality and quantity of the content for Education 5.0 is beyond the scope of the learners, thus causing ineffable anxiety and frustration. Therefore, the authors recommend that the MoPSE reviews the policy Education 5.0, so that it is in sync with its predecessor Education 3.0. Teachers and item writers need to be capacitated and motivated to deliver the desired outcomes. Practical tasks given to learners require review in terms of complexity, quantum, and accessibility

of research sources, as a majority of learners have challenges in data accessibility, connectivity, and affordability. Policy makers could also incorporate VR, AR, m-learning, and CoI as learning tools in ICT. This could result in better learning outcomes. Further research on the impact of the policy Education 5.0 in Zimbabwe could be carried out.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors of this publication declare there are no competing interests.

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Cleophas Gwakwara is a Principal External Relations Officer at the Parliament of Zimbabwe. He is part of the technical and administrative decision support systems to Presiding Officers, Members of Parliament, the Clerk of Parliament and Senior Management of Parliament on Protocol and Parliamentary Diplomacy issues Gwakwara also serves as a SADC PF Desk Officer and was instrumental in writing the Strategic Lobby Document on the Transformation of the SADC PF into a Regional Parliament. The document became the most crucial strategic tool for driving the Transformation Agenda. Currently, he is a Researcher with the SADC PF, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) Project.

Eric Blanco Niyitunga is a senior lecturer at the University of Johannesburg, in the College of Business and Economics, school of Public Governance, Management and Public Policy. Niyitunga holds a DLitt et Phil in Political Studies from the University of Johannesburg, and an MA in International Peace and Security from the Department of War Studies at King's College London, UK. Niyitunga holds BA in Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies (Magna Cum Laude) from Daystar University, Kenya. Niyitunga is a member of the African Leadership Centre. Niyitunga is a reader in critical issues international relations, African politics and studies, Africa's international relations, digital diplomacy, international mediation, peacebuilding and statebuilding, service delivery in devolved governments and Artificial Intelligence technologies. Niyitunga has published extensively in the areas of political science, international relations, e-governance, peacebuilding and peace education, mediation, blockchain and Artificial intelligence. He has also published articles concerning health diplomacy and supervises MA and PhD students in health diplomacy, e-government, e-governance, politics of service delivery, Artificial Intelligence technologies, and Sustainable Development Goals.