

Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) for Technical and Vocational Education Secondary School Student Teachers: A Case of a Polytechnic in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) calls for teachers to take an all-encompassing gender approach in their process of lesson planning, classroom management, and performance evaluation. Teachers are central to the teaching and learning process, hence their understanding and awareness of gender responsiveness is key to effective participation of girls and boys in the learning process. The paper sought to assess the level of awareness and the extent to which the Technical and Vocational Education secondary school teachers implement GRP in their teaching and learning process during Teaching Practice (TP). Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select Technical and Vocational Education secondary school student teachers and their trainers. Structured questionnaires, interviews and observations were used to collect data. Findings revealed that the curriculum for Technical and Vocational Education secondary school teachers covered gender studies in general. However, some of the student teachers and the trainers were not familiar with the concept of GRP. The student teachers scarcely embraced GRP in their teaching and learning process. The study recommends that there is need for revamping the Curriculum for Technical and Vocational Education secondary school student teachers so that specific GRP issues are integrated into the curriculum. There is also need for an intensive GRP training for Technical and Vocational Education secondary school trainers and student teachers in order for them to acquire skills for making teaching and learning process responsive to the specific needs of girls and boys.

Introduction

The government of Zimbabwe has taken so many moves to create positive societal attitudes, policies and practices that promote equity for girls and boys in terms of access, retention, performance and quality through the transformation of the education system in the country. Through the Education Act of 1987, education was declared a basic human right, making primary and secondary public education free and compulsory. According to the Zimbabwe Education Act (Chapter 25:04) all children have the right to education. Such legislation paved way for equality and equity between girls and boys, and women and men as they all could access education without discrimination. The government made efforts to build schools at least five (5) km radius to bring education to the people.

The Nziramasanga Commission of 1999 recommended that every secondary school going child should do at least two (2) technical and vocational subjects regardless of gender. This was meant to facilitate acquisition of technical and vocation skills and competences in pupils that would help them later in life to become self-reliant or to pursue career paths in specialist areas. This move was not only to transform the socio-economic status of the school leavers and their families, but for the nation at large. Technical and vocational school leaver would reduce the unemployment rate in the country as they would be able to create employment and generate some income.

Culturally in Zimbabwe, people still believe that subjects such as Fashion and Fabrics, Food and Nutrition and Home Management are meant for girls whereas Metal Work, Building and Agriculture are meant for boys due to gender stereotyping. Allocation of these secondary school technical and vocational subjects has however been biased. This has been witnessed in secondary schools where you can find very few boys or girls in gender stereotyped subjects.

Due to the shortage of technical and vocational school teachers in Zimbabwe the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education in 2009 mandated Gweru Polytechnic to train technical and vocational secondary school teachers under the association of University of Zimbabwe Department of Teacher Education (DTE). The recruitment requirements were that the candidates should possess five o'level passes plus a specialist professional qualification in technical and vocational courses such as Clothing and Textiles, Accountancy, Metal Fabrication, Technical Graphics, Electrical Engineering and Office Management.

These candidates would then go through a sixteen (16) month pedagogy training following a 1-2-1 model. One (1) term initial residential phase, two (2) terms Teaching Practice (TP) and one (1) final residential phase. Gender studies were mainstreamed in their pedagogy training before they go for TP. During the TP phase the student teachers would be expected to practice Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) especially against the background that very few girls select technical and vocational subjects like Metal Work, Wood Work, Building and Agriculture and very few boys would also select subjects like Fashion and Fabrics, Food and Nutrition and Home Management.

From FAWE's review (2005), the majority of the schools in Sub-Saharan Africa are not gender responsive. The lack of gender responsiveness in the school environment permeates to the classroom. For example, teaching and learning materials contain gender stereotypes;

teachers are not aware of gender specific needs of both girls and boys; discriminatory practices against girls take place in classroom participation and distribution of learning materials. This discourages boys and girls from participating effectively in the teaching and learning process.

In subjects like Fashion and Fabrics, the researcher observed that some teachers were gender insensitive to the point of making boys sew skirts or dresses as their coursework garments instead of giving them trousers, shorts or shirts which they could wear afterwards.

It is against this background that the researcher sought to assess the gender responsiveness of technical and vocational education secondary school student teachers from Gweru Polytechnic.

Statement of the problem

Technical and Vocational education student teacher curriculum covers Gender studies. Most of the student teacher did not study gender during their technical specialising courses. Since these teachers are going to find themselves in the middle of a class with both boys and girls, they need to be better equipped when it comes to handling gender pedagogy issues.

FAWE (2006) state “the major obstacle facing teachers today however is the apparent lack of skills for instruction yet the ability of the teacher to effectively use gender responsive pedagogy can be accomplished if teacher is well grounded in gender responsive teaching skills.

Research questions

- 1) To what extent does the gender studies curriculum at Gweru Polytechnic cover Gender Responsive Pedagogy (RGP)?
- 2) Do the Technical and Vocational student teachers on TP embrace GRP in their teaching and learning activities?
- 3) What can be done to promote GRP in teacher training institutions and in secondary school?

Research objectives

- 1) To determine the extent to which the gender studies curriculum at Gweru Polytechnic covers GRP.
- 2) To establish whether the Technical and Vocational Education secondary school student teachers embrace GRP in their teaching and learning activities.

Literature review

Mlama et al (2005) define gender as “socially determined roles and relations between males and females”. On the other hand, Haralambos and Holborn refers to gender as the human traits linked by culture to each sex. In simpler terms gender refers to socially and culturally constructed roles or behaviour patterns that differentiate men from women. The roles or behaviours can also be described in terms of masculinity and femininity. According to Mawere et al (2011), gender roles are duties, chores, tasks, responsibilities or assignments that a particular group of people consider appropriate for its males or females on the basis of the meaning attached to their sexual identity. The authors went on to say that the roles are learnt, vary within and among cultures, are dynamic, interchangeable and can be affected by factors like class, religion, age, education, geographical location and ethnicity.

In technical and vocational education subjects, Fashion and Fabrics, Food and Nutrition and Home Management are ascribed to feminine gender whilst Metal Work, Building and Agriculture are ascribed to masculine gender. When secondary school pupils select or are allocated technical and vocational subjects, the teachers and pupils are influenced by gender roles that are socially and culturally acceptable in their societies.

Gender stereotyping

Mawere et al (2011) say that they are socially constructed ideas or beliefs about men and women which can be maintained, perpetuated and transmitted from generation to generation by social institutions like the family, school, media, religion and culture. According to Mlama (2005) the social construction of gender is manifested and reinforced by various structures such as the family, community, schools and media.

Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP)

According to Mlama et al (2011) Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) refers to teaching and learning process that pay attention to specific learning needs of both girls and boys. It calls for teachers to take an all-encompassing gender approach in the process of lesson planning, teaching, and classroom management and performance evaluation. Mlama et al (2005) asserts that there is need to train teachers so that they acquire skills for making teaching and learning process responsive to the specific needs of girls and boys. Kirk (2005) suggest that inexperienced teachers should be provided by practical skills and techniques with great emphasis on teacher training empowering teachers as agents of transformation within the education sector and within society as a whole. For example FAWE designed the GRP model to equip teachers and school management with knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to respond adequately to learning needs of girls and boys. The GRP model makes the teacher more gender aware by training them in gender sensitive classroom processes and practices which results in equal participation of boys and girls in the classroom as well as in the community.

Teachers can be made gender responsive through gender mainstreaming in teacher training institutions. The teacher education curriculum and process need to shift from apparently gender neutral technical training, to be grounded in women's and men's experiences and perspectives and to promote an empowering personal and professional development (Kirk 2005). Gudhlanga and Chirimuuta (2012) recommended that there is need to involve key faculties in engendering the curriculum. They believe that for both male and female teachers still in college the curriculum needs to incorporate gender awareness programmes. Gender sensitive education needs to be introduced and enhanced so that those teachers will not perpetuate male dominance and female subordination in their lessons.

Mlama et al (2011) and FAWE (2018) advocates that GRP model should cover the following concepts:

Gender responsive lesson planning

A gender responsive lesson plan is therefore a teaching plan that takes into consideration the specific needs of girls and boys in all the teaching-learning processes. In lesson planning the teacher decides on the learning materials, methodologies, content, learning activities, language use, classroom interaction, assessment and classroom set up. Whereas many

teachers have the skills to develop good lesson plans, most do not have the skills for making the plans gender responsive.

Gender responsive language use in classroom

Language is a tool of communication, which reveals a lot about what we think and believe and therefore must be used appropriately. Incorrect language use can transmit negative message and inhibit learning. A teacher can enhance students' performance by using encouraging language in the classroom. Language can also reinforce gender differences and inequalities. Teachers reflect their own gender biases through language such as their beliefs that girls cannot perform as well as boys, or that boys should not allow themselves to be outperformed by girls academically. When a girl is assertive, she is told to stop behaving like a boy and when a boy cries, he is cautioned to stop behaving like a woman. Teachers should be conscious of gender-biases in languages.

Gender responsive classroom set up

A gender responsive classroom set up responds to the specific needs of both boys and girls. This includes: Classroom set up that mixes girls and boys. Classroom set up that enhances participation of both girls and boys. Arrangement of the desks which encourages girls to speak out and overcome their shyness. Fixtures and visual aids on the walls that send gender responsive messages. Appropriate shelf heights in the libraries. Appropriate size, shape and weight of desks and chairs.

Gender responsive classroom interaction

The teacher needs to be aware that the students are also boys and girls with specific gender needs. As such, the gender roles and relations impact on the classroom interaction processes. This is where such matters as sexual harassment, male domination and female passivity come into play. Therefore it is important to create gender responsive classroom interaction.

Gender responsive management of sexual maturation

The teacher should also provide time to deal with gender specific problems, if any, such as girls who have missed class due to menstruation, household chores or family responsibilities, bullying, sexual harassment, adolescent hormonal upheavals, impact of HIV/AIDS, peer pressure among others. The rapid body changes that accompany maturation in both boys and girls may interfere with learning. For example, the monthly menstruation for girls may lead

to pain and discomfort. The girls may also fear staining their dresses. There are also those girls who are too poor to afford sanitary pads and therefore they miss school altogether for several days each month. Often schools do not have adequate and appropriate sanitation for example enough water, sanitary bins, or emergency sanitary wear.

Gender responsive sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is an unfortunate experience that girls and boys face daily in their schooling lives. Apart from the forced sexual act, sexual harassment includes abusive language and gestures, sexual advances, touching and groping, passing unwanted notes and character assassination through graffiti. The victims are often times the silent sufferers particularly when they are in the same school environment with the perpetrators. As such, it has a negative impact on teaching and learning processes. Sexual harassment harms both boys and girls physically, psychologically and emotionally. Further, it embarrasses, humiliates and shames the victims. Girls are particularly vulnerable which renders them susceptible to early pregnancy, STIs and HIV AIDS, which leads to poor performance, stigmatization, dropping out of school and death.

Gender responsive school management systems

The school management has a critical role to play in transforming a school into a gender responsive environment which is necessary for nurturing a gender responsive pedagogy. For example, it is the role of the school management to provide teaching and learning materials that are gender responsive and to train teachers in gender responsive pedagogy. In addition, the management should formulate, apply and monitor rules and regulations that address issues that will transform the school into a gender responsive environment.

Methods

Research design

Trashins (2006) defines research design as the plan, the structure and the strategy of investigations. Curry (2003) postulates that, a research design actually provides a plan, structure and strategy of how data can be outlined and analysed systematically so as to provide answers to the specific research questions and control variance. The researcher selected a case study design because of the nature of the research problem and the questions being asked. The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting

of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Erickson (2006) argues that since the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations.

Population

Mwamwenda (2005) define population as “any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher”. Population refers to people in a group to be studied from which a sample can be chosen and from the sample deductions about the larger group can be made, this is a sampling technique. Technical and vocational education staff (29) and student teachers (102) from intake 8 and intake 9 in the Division of Education and Training at Gweru Polytechnic constitute the population.

Sample

Leedy (2009) says a sample is portion taken from the main population from data which is collected. This sample was meant to reduce the area understudy so as to complete the study in a given time frame. The sample comprised of eight (8) staff members and twenty (20) student teachers who specialised in Clothing and Textile Technology and Metal Work.

Sampling procedure

Purposive sampling technique was used to select eight (8) trainers including the Head of Division, Head of Department, and Teaching Practice Lecturer-In-Charge, sociology lecturer, two lecturers from CTT and two from Metal Work. These respondents were selected because they possessed the data that would enable the researcher to answer the research questions. Stratified sampling was used to select twelve (12) CTT student teachers and eight (8) Metal Work student teachers.

Research instruments

Questionnaire, interview, observation and document analysis were used to collect data.

Questionnaires

Chikoko (2006) say that a questionnaire is document containing questions designed to seek information appropriate for analysis. Questionnaires were hand delivered to student teachers during their contact sessions at the polytechnic. They were collected after thirty (30) minutes.

Interviews

. Cohen et al (2006) described an interview as the method which entails the gathering of data through a direct verbal interaction between individuals. In this process the researcher asked questions to the student teacher trainers on the awareness and the extent to which the Technical and Vocational Education secondary school student teachers implement GRP in their teaching process during Teaching Practice (TP).

Observation

Bell (2010) places emphasis on the value of observation in research as it permits the researcher to come into direct contact with phenomena. Use of this technique in this research project hence greatly assisted the researcher to obtain first-hand information on how the Technical and Vocational Education secondary school student teachers implement GRP in their teaching process during Teaching Practice (TP). The observation findings were used to back up the data gathered through questionnaires and interviews

Document analysis

According to Coolican (2009) document analysis broadly describes a heterogeneous domain of techniques which are focused upon the more or less systematic objectives and quantitative description of a communication or series of communications. Document analysis was used to analyse syllabi, schemes and lesson plans for tech-voc student teachers to establish the extent to which their curriculum covered GRP.

Data collection procedure

Questionnaires were distributed to the student teachers personally and they were collected after thirty minutes. Face to face interviews were carried out with selected trainers in the Division of Education and Training when it was convenient with their work schedules. Observations were done twice with student teachers during TP supervisions when they were carrying out their day to day activities. Document analysis was used to analyse syllabi, schemes and lesson plans for tech-voc student teachers to establish the extent to which their curriculum covered GRP.

Data management

Data collected was coded, typed and entered on the computer. Data was analysed according to themes which emerged from the findings.

Results and discussion

Findings and discussions were based on the themes which emerged from the research questions as follows:

1. The extent to which the gender studies curriculum at Gweru Polytechnic covers GRP.
2. Whether the Technical and Vocational Education secondary school student teachers embrace GRP in their teaching and learning activities.

Table 1: Demographic data and response rate

Status	Gender		Total	Total responded	Percentage
	Male	Female			
Staff	3	5	8	8	100%
Students	7	13	20	18	90%
Total	10	18	28	26	92%

Table 1 above shows a summary of the total number of the respondents who participated in the study. Eight (8) trainers and twenty (20) student teachers. All the trainers responded whilst 90% of the student teachers returned the questionnaire.

To what extent does the gender studies curriculum at Gweru Polytechnic cover Gender Responsive Pedagogy (RGP)?

All the trainers and student teachers concurred that the Teacher Education Curriculum cover Gender Studies in general.

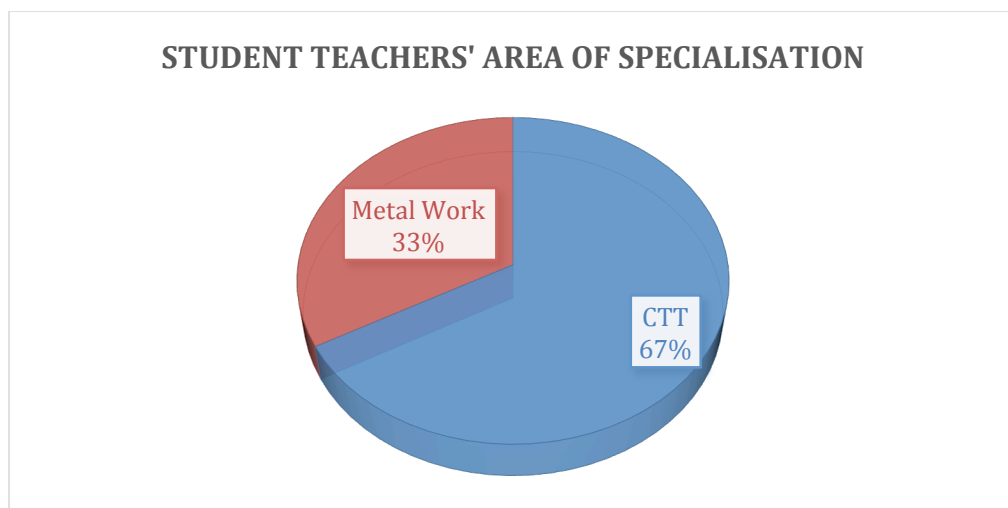


Figure 1: Student teacher's area of specialisation

Data on Figure 2 indicates that 67% of the student teachers were specialising in Clothing and Textile Technology (CTT) whereas 37% was specialising in Metal Work.

Table 2: What do you understand by gender responsive pedagogy?

	Frequency	Percentage
Equality in boys and girls	14	78
Study of gender	1	5
No response	3	17

Data presented in table 3 revealed that 78% of the student teachers said that GRP is about equality in boys and girls, 5% referred to it as just the study of gender and 17% did not respond to the question. The student teacher were not familiar with the term GRP.

Table 3: Which of the following gender responsive pedagogy aspects are covered in your curriculum

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender responsive lesson planning	7	39
Gender responsive language use in classroom	11	61
Gender responsive classroom set up	9	50
Gender responsive classroom interaction	13	72
Gender responsive management of sexual maturation	6	33
Gender responsive sexual harassment	4	22

Findings in Table 3 showed that Gender responsive language use and classroom set up with 61% and 72% respectively were the most selected as the aspects covered in Gender studies curriculum. However, gender responsive classroom set up (50%), lesson planning (39%), management of sexual maturation (33%) and sexual harassment (22%) received minimum responses.

Do the Technical and Vocational student teachers on TP embrace GRP in their teaching and learning activities?

Based on the observations made, group work, demonstration and question and answer were the commonly used approaches to encourage participation of boys and girls whilst role play, experimentation, discovery and seminars were scarcely used.

Table 5: During your lesson planning how do you take into account gender issues?

	Frequency	Percentage
Have same sex class	1	6
Give girls and boys equal work/tasks	11	61
No responsive	6	33

A summary of responses on table 5 indicated that 61% of the student teachers gave equal work/tasks to pupils, 31% did not respond and 6% had same sex class.

Language used to encourage boys and girls to perform better

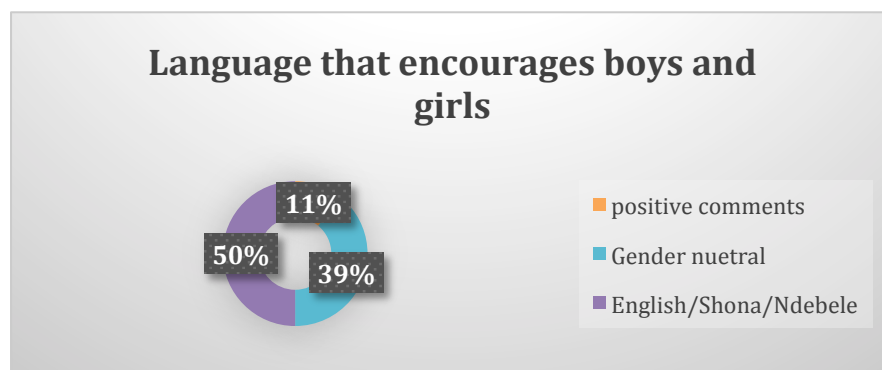


Figure 2: Language that encourage boys and girls to participate in class

Findings presented on Figure 2 revealed that 50% of the student teachers used English/Shona/Ndebele, 39% used gender neutral and 11% used positive comments.

In a gender responsive environment, which words could be used in place of the following: Headmaster, choirmaster, sports master, senior master and chairman?

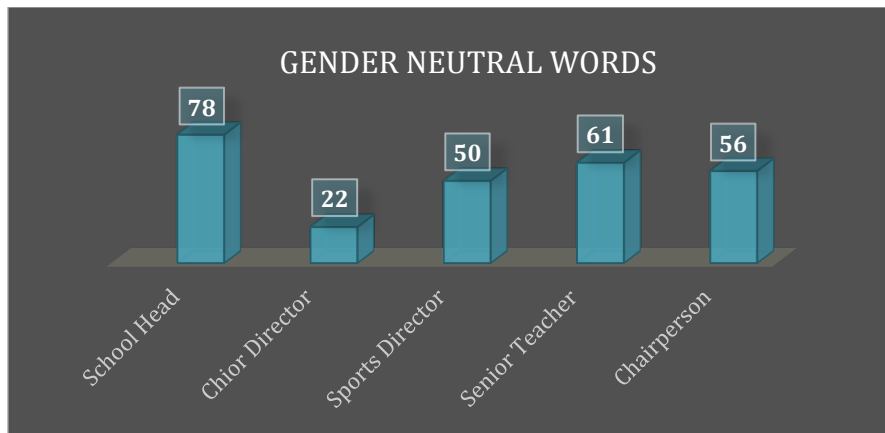


Figure 3: Gender-neutral words

Data presented on Figure 3 shows that 78% of the student teachers used school head in place of headmaster, 61% used senior teacher in place of senior master, 56% chair person in place of chairman, 50% sports director in place of sports master and 22% choir director in place of choir master.

Do following acts perpetuate or reinforce gender stereotyping in the education system?

SA - 1 = Strongly Agree, A - 2 = agree, N - 3 = Neutral, D - 4 = Disagree

SD - 5 = Strongly Disagree

n=18

		SA	A	N	D	SD
A	Teachers/parents selecting Tech-Voc subjects for pupils.	33	22	11	17	17
B	Using textbooks with stereotyped material in the classroom.	28	28	17	22	6
C	Assigning girls to sweep and mop the classroom while boys erase the board.	33	6	0	28	33
D	Using sitting arrangements that separate boys from girls.	22	6	6	28	39
E	Using teaching methodologies that do not give boys and girls equal opportunity to participate.	22	6	0	28	44
F	Giving leadership positions to boys only.	39	0	0	11	50

What can be done to promote GRP in teacher training institutions and in secondary school by different stockholders?

A	Teacher training institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enrol male and female students without discrimination and treat them equally -include GRP issues in the curriculum -Help under-privileged students with fee payment plans
B	School management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All students should be treated equally -should not select Tech-Voc subjects for students -Should have a 50% representation of both sexes
C	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -treat boys and girls equally -Be sensitive to gender issues -Participate in GRP seminars and sensitisation programmes
D	Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -should be allowed to make personal Tech-Voc subject selection -Should be given equal chances to participate in Tech-Voc subjects teaching and learning activities -should not discriminate each other on the basis of gender
E	Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Should not interfere with pupils choice on selection of Tech-Voc subjects -should motivate students to do practical subjects of their choice.

Discussion of findings

One of the objective of the study was to determine the extent to which the gender studies curriculum at Gweru Polytechnic covers GRP. Findings revealed that the curriculum for tech-voc student teachers at Gweru Polytechnic did not cover some specific GRP concepts. The student teachers were not familiar with specific GRP concepts. Gudhlanga and Chirimuuta

(2012) recommended that there is need to involve key faculties in engendering the curriculum.

The other objective was to establish whether the Technical and Vocational Education secondary school student teachers embrace GRP in their teaching and learning activities. Findings revealed that student teachers scarcely embrace GRP during TP. 33% of the students did not respond on how they were embracing GRP in their lesson planning. Mlama et al (2005) asserts that there is need to train teachers so that they acquire skills for making teaching and learning process responsive to the specific needs of girls and boys.

Conclusion

Tec-Voc curriculum for student teachers at Gweru Polytechnic does not cover some specific GRP concepts. The student teacher had very limited information of GRP. Student teachers scarcely embrace GRP during TP.

Recommendations

- Teacher training institutions should include GRP in their curriculum.
- Trainers and teachers should be trained in GRP through staff development seminars and sensitisation workshops
- School management, teachers and parents should not interfere with the pupils' selection of Tec-Voc Subjects.

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