# In – service professional teacher development in times of Covid – 19 pandemic crisis: Great Zimbabwe University response

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**Abstract**
The study contributes to academic discourses on how the university – based in – service professional teacher development training has remained relevant in an ever-changing professional culture and contexts occasioned by world pandemics like Covid -19. It focuses on the extent to which the in – service professional teacher development curriculum has responded to new challenges posed by Covid – 19 pandemic. The complex conversation is about the in – service professional development curriculum, the students' lived experiences drawn from in service programmes offered at Great Zimbabwe University in Zimbabwe. This involved an interpretivist qualitative case study of five experienced lecturers and ten in – service teachers with at least two years post training primary school teaching experience. The aim was to explore the response by one state university in developing an appropriate in – service curriculum to meet new needs in training posed by Covid – 19 pandemic. Data were collected using semi – structured interviews and focus group discussions. The main finding was that the university experienced a lot of challenges in responding to this educational emergency resulting in an inappropriate response and approach to the pandemic. The participants decried the absence of a well thought out response to the educational emergencies caused by Covid -19. It concludes by suggesting that prompt curriculum innovation and disaster management strategies can be beneficial for providing a relevant response and an impact in – service programme for Zimbabwean primary schools.

**Key words:** In – service, teacher development, Covid – 19, in service, curriculum reform, teaching and learning, innovation

## Introduction and background
The in - service professional teacher development in universities has remained and continue to be debated by all stakeholders (Khan & Law 2015: 66) especially on how it can cope with new demands posed by ever changing contexts in education. In – service training has become one of the significant topical discussions in education as a mitigation strategy in preparing teachers to meet changing educational demands. It forms part of the larger efforts in contributing to the effectiveness, completeness and overall quality of learners' educational experiences. This is primarily because in – service teacher development by nature is premised

not only on updating knowledge and skills but also in accommodating changes, innovations and keeping informed about developments in education (Cimer, Cakir & Cimer: 2010). Koechy (2019) observed that the contexts for the provision of education is changing so should teacher training to be inline with the challenging situations of the contemporary times.

In – service student teachers are practising teachers who, upon realising performance gaps, enrol at universities to acquire new knowledge, skills and modern methodologies to function effectively and efficiently in an ever changing educational context(Osamwonyi: 2016). Institutions that prepare in – service teachers need to be more alert to embrace curriculum revision and change to provide relevant and up to date knowledge and skills to handle new educational emergencies and pandemics (Poedjiastutie, Akhyar, Hidayati & Gasmi: 2018). While in –service programmes the world over have different thrusts, the Covid – 19 situations have become one of the most important determinants in developing a relevant and needs driven curriculum at university level.

The Covid – 19 has dominated the new world order and will be with us for a long time. This calls for all sectors including education to diligently devise new and innovative survival measures. Educational responses to the Covid – 19 pandemic showed that the disease has stimulated the appetite to develop educational innovation (Mukute, Francis, Burt & de Souza: 2020). The general response by the Zimbabwean education ministries to Covid – 19 pandemic, just like in most Southern African countries, was to develop a response plan and modalities anchored on continued teaching and learning using multiple non - interactive virtual approaches (UNICEF 2020 - 2021). The Zambian education sector, in response to the Covid –19 pandemic adopted a raft of measures that included innovative methods of instruction to help students and their teachers to engage (Sintema 2020). A study by Matsilele (2021) on Zimbabwean higher education institutions' response to Covid – 19 showed that universities made attempts to salvage teaching and learning and was done factoring in affordability and accessibility issues. However most of the mitigation efforts were directed at reducing the loss of lives. According to Cahapay (2020), with this critical situation, there was need to consider the provision of education anew in light of the emerging opportunities and challenges.

Covid – 19 has created unique educational contexts which need urgent reforms in both knowledge and instructional strategies. Universities, thus, should see a silver lining out of the debilitating effects (Farooq: 2016) of such pandemics like Covid – 19 as a turning point in developing responses that mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic. Perhaps, the most pressing need is for the in – service curriculum is to quickly embrace the new normal and see opportunities to grow teacher professional development to new levels to meet new demands. This, according to Farooq (2016), this would enable these in – service student teachers to be aware of how they can continue to be effective, efficient and cope with the new demands and crisis in education.

For meaningful in - service teacher learning and development at university level, teachers need to be equipped, capacitated, supported and guided to acquire strategies to understand the shifts and turns in curriculum, instruction and assessment during pandemic times (Farooq: 2016 ; Alene & Prasadh 2019). The success of this process is dependent on providing a context based on paying attention to the professional needs of the in – service teachers.

Evidence suggests that most university teacher education programmes, including in – service, remain higher education institution – led (Menter, Hulme, Elliot, & Lewin: 2010). In Zimbabwean universities, generally, the curriculum has remained a straight jacket. The firm, tried and tested modes of curriculum transaction can longer help teachers to navigate through the new educational terrain caused by Covid – 19. According to Jagersma (2010) there is a need to engage these in – service teachers in the development of their curriculum in order to create opportunities to attain desirable, sustainable and best possible learning outcomes. The participation of in – service teachers in this process does not relegate them to consumers of ideas professionally decided elsewhere by other persons (Mufanechiya & Mufanechiya 2011) but contribute in decisions about what is worthwhile or not during the crisis periods when they discharge their teaching duties. A large and growing body of literature (Hunzicker 2010, Khan & Law 2015, Walter & Briggs 2012, McCain 2005) has reported on knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies

expected of in – service teachers from the programme but had not focused on how to change curriculum to respond to pandemics. Creating discourses on how in - service teacher development curriculum in Zimbabwean universities can speak to educational emergencies has remained an urgent need. Designing an appropriate curriculum for in – service professional development in readiness to face new challenges posed by pandemics is considered a foundation stone for high quality programmes and services (Khan & Law 2015). The net effect is the design of a programme that does not develop skills and capabilities (Knight & Drysdale 2020) and does not speak to in - service teachers' needs to respond to contexts posed by Covid – 19.

Authors have argued that in – service programme is meant to elevate practising teachers' professional practice by increasing their competitiveness and competences in a fast changing educational world(Alene & Prasadh 2019, Carroll &McCulloch 2014, Cimer et al 2010,).The programme should be about addressing how in – service students apply their learning to relevant classroom work – based scenarios (Knight & Drysdale 2020). Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) lament what is obtaining in most universities that educational programmes have emphasised on less important components to the impoverishment of important aspects that have meaning to in - service teachers' professional lives. McCain (2005) draws our attention to the fact that instead of equipping practising in - service teachers with useful real – world skills as hoped, in – service programmes have produced skills on how to survive at university by teaching university skills. These skills are only necessary for success inside the university system. In fact, there has been lack of innovation in curriculum design in universities as traditional practices remain intact.

Hunzicker (2010) adds that in - service teachers deem professional development at university relevant when it directly addresses their specific needs and concerns, or when they see the connection between a learning experience and other daily responsibilities. Further, Knight and Drysdale (2020) observe that institutions benefit by having better educational outcomes with reduced tensions between what is learnt and what the in – service teachers require for successful teaching. The consensus should be that universities should create an active vision of learning motivated by the urgent need to address current educational crisis posed by pandemics. According to Osler (2010) in – service teachers have less to say about the content of the curriculum at universities, yet it should be relevant to their teaching needs. They have not been part of how the curriculum is designed, developed and delivered at university level.

The overall aim of the article was to describe how in – service teachers' educational experiences at university level had helped them to respond to educational challenges posed by pandemics such as Covid – 19. It was also about revitalising debate on the in – service teacher development curriculum and educational crisis management strategies at universities in Zimbabwe.

## Theoretical Framework

The nature of teacher professional development may best be understood from the perspective of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). This process – oriented theoretical framework (Antoniadou 2011) was used in this study as an analytical tool to understand and make sense of in – service teacher professional development programme could be tailor –made to new teaching challenges brought about by Covid – 19. Vygotsky's notion of knowledge as a social construction and that meaning making is shaped by history, social interaction and national context (Anderson 2013) informed the study.

Several studies have drawn on CHAT as analysis framework for professional development programmes (Arievitch & Haenen 2005, Katsuhiro 2006, Antoniadou 2011, Fahim & Haghani 2012, Bargate & Maistry 2015). Concepts and theories of CHAT assume that learning emerges not only through interaction but in interaction as students learn new knowledge and skills that reflect on real problems. Covid – 19 has disrupted the traditional key pillars of teaching and learning, thus, requiring a new socially constructed way of designing, delivering and assessing the curriculum.

CHAT suggests an important comprehensive way to analyse, facilitate and support different and innovative collaborative curriculum practices, approaches and learning (Katsuhiro 2006, Edwards 2011). Using CHAT theoretical perspective of learning in this study, in – service teachers could acquire better knowledge and skills at university level relevant in today's ever changing teaching – learning contexts. This

would ensure that the programme remains focused on developing relevant teacher competencies to address new challenges. As pointed out above, in -service primary school teachers could interact and share with lecturers their own teaching experiences and new challenges posed by Covid - 19. These could be incorporated into the in – service programme formulation resulting in university – primary school curriculum integration.

The theory becomes a rich source of deeper understanding of how current educational challenges in the period of crisis caused by Covid – 19 can be mitigated by developing a responsive in – service teacher development curriculum for Zimbabwean teachers. The theory becomes a platform from which to look at curriculum design and instructional discourses at university influenced by what is globally obtaining. It becomes an important framework, a lens through which to appreciate and clarify how learning and in - service professional teacher development takes place at universities when curriculum addresses topical issues in education. A key aspect of professional teacher development is that the knowledge and skills should help teachers to be problem solvers and change agents in their classrooms (Scott & Palincsar 2013).The in – service programme should prepare these teachers for entry into new and demanding challenges they face as a result of emergencies. The idea is not to displace previous practices but to understand how they can complement with new ones.

Using the framework, we argue that effective in - service professional teacher development can be achieved. It could be possible when curriculum practices such as curriculum design and development at universities should recognise the importance of incorporating appropriate sustainable responses to educational emergencies.

## Methodology

This qualitative case study was guided by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theoretical framework with its emphasis on knowledge being socially constructed and how it can be applied in real life contexts. The theory recognises how knowledge is organised as curriculum content and how it is connected to teachers' practice (Muthivhi 2008). There should be a connection between what is offered by the programme and how it speaks to current real life challenges in education.

The major objective was to develop an understanding on how the in – service primary school teachers on the university programme were prepared to deal with Covid – 19 pandemic as an emergency in education. The research studied the experiences of five (5) experienced lecturers purposively sampled on the merit of teaching on the programme as well as ten (10) in – service student teachers with at least two years teaching experience. The study involved an exploration of a bounded system, bound by time, context and place through detailed in – depth data collection taking into account various data sources (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport 2012). The study used semi – structured interviews in respect of lecturers and focus group discussion with in – service student teachers. These qualitative data collection instruments allowed the in – service student teachers and the lecturers to bring their own knowledge, interpretations, meaning , experiences, opinions and practices (Gray 2011) concerning the university prepared students to manage challenges caused by Covid – 19 pandemic. The two sets of participants allowed diversified set of responses and multiple voices to the problem (Rapley 2001). The interviews and focus group discussions were audio – recorded with the ethical principles of consent and confidentiality from the participants.

This qualitative research generated knowledge grounded in human experiences (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules 2017). To that end, the thematic analysis framework was used to identify, analyse and report patterns within the collected data (Braun & Clarke 2006). The thematic analysis helped the researchers to group related concepts, broad salient themes and recurring ideas (de Vos et al 2012, Green & Thorogood 2014) of the participants' accounts. Further, the researchers took into account Srivastava and Hopwood's (2009) explanation that the qualitative analyst is always on the hunt fro concepts and themes that, when put together, provide the best explanation of 'what is going on.'

## Research Findings and Discussion

In describing and analysing the results the researchers were informed by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. The theory emphasises the importance of socially constructed knowledge and shared ideas to address educational challenges. We drew on specific extracts to construct meaning to demonstrate how in – service teachers and lecturers conceptualised the design of a curriculum that had meaning in crisis situations induced by Covid - 19 and how the university responded. The experiences of in – service teachers and lecturers were organised using the thematic analysis framework which culminated in three themes namely; the need for curriculum reform involving in – service teachers, areas of involvement and challenges to teacher involvement.

### The need for curriculum reform involving in- service teachers

Both sets of participants agreed to the urgent need for an in – service curriculum reform to address new emerging challenges in education posed by Covid – 19.   This was driven by the need to develop new knowledge and skills that addressed real classroom problems faced by the in - service teachers. Lecturers and in - service teachers viewed the current in – service teacher development curriculum as traditional and failing to respond to educational situations posed by Covid – 19. The general consensus among the participants was that Covid – 19 had created a new normal in education which in - service teacher development institutions should quickly adopt to develop relevant teacher competencies consistent with the current times. There was a mismatch between the implemented curriculum and the expected outcomes in the current crisis situation.  Lecturer 1 observed:

> *In – service teacher development is very important as these teachers need to update knowledge and skills in a volatile educational context. The programme only becomes relevant when it helps in – service teachers to connect with their new classroom needs caused by Covid - 19 which unfortunately has not. The university has been caught flatfooted oblivious of the new challenges.*

The voices of the in – service teachers in focus group discussion:

> *We are mature practising primary school teachers and have experiences from real teaching- learning contexts which can inform and determine in - service programme design resulting in better learning outcomes.  Our thinking was that the programme curriculum was going to quickly embrace the different new situations created by Covid – 19. Unfortunately that has not happened. It has remained the same old content and lecturing strategies the only difference being that delivery was mainly online using WhatsApp and to some extent on Google classroom.*

Collectively, these sentiments outline the critical need for educational partnership between the lecturers and in – service teachers so that there are shared ideas to ensure that the programme responds appropriately to teacher needs during the crisis period. Engagement of in – service teachers at university means to accept that lecturers are not the only producers of knowledge but teachers can also be co – determiners and critical programme actors. Consistent with Vygotsky's CHAT theory that informed this study, Muthivhi (2008) acknowledges that lecturer – student partnership helps university academics to understand not only the knowledge from the teacher but the manner in which that knowledge is organised and packaged as curriculum content to deal with emerging educational issues. It is assumed that the university curriculum discourse should create a bond between the in – service teachers and lecturers and refresh programme by infusing content that resonates with current educational struggles posed by Covid – 19 pandemic. By developing the lecturer – in – service teacher relationship, Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) correctly point out that universities would not emphasise on less important areas but those important aspects that have meaning to the teachers' professional lives.

The evidence from the study suggests that a needs driven curriculum was important and necessary for meaningful, useful and relevant in – service programme that responds to new demands. In – service teachers

should be supported and empowered through the curriculum to transform their experiences, knowledge and skills in order to flourish during these crisis times. Covid – 19 pandemic has deskilled most teachers. The in – service programme should, thus, focus on what Farrell, Salchak, Kane and Dube (2015) call short – term and long term goals that lay an important response foundation to re - skill teachers. Rubin and Silva (2003) believe that universities should do more than preach platitudes about the importance of having a responsive curriculum but should go beyond than developing traditional model of lecturer - generated and driven programmes which do not speak to current times. This could entail flexibility on the in – service programme curriculum   in new ways of looking at the whole curriculum formulation process by creating and designing a relevant in - service programme.

**Areas for curriculum reform**
Covid – 19 has created a unique educational context and the need to reconsider the provision of education in light of the emerging challenges cannot be overemphasised. From the participants, a number of areas were affected which needed redress by way of new training. The most affected was the traditional face to face and schools urgently adopted untested virtual classrooms, rotational teaching to create school space to enforce WHO Covid – 19 guidelines, blended learning, radio and television lessons among others. Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir and Siddique (2020) hold that Covid – 19 pandemic undeniably caught the education sector, especially university systems off guard. The study findings indicate that the in -service programme did not respond to the new complex phenomenon posed by Covid – 19. Yet, according to Farooq (2016) these teachers are at the heart of all classroom activities and their competencies are of paramount importance to cope with the challenges they face. They need to be equipped with opportunities to understand and implement the shifting realities in education in response to Covid – 19 pandemic. The in – service programme should transcend the traditional centralised one way decision – making university culture system currently being implemented to a more flexible approach to develop an inclusive and responsive curriculum. In line with Vygotsky (1978), knowledge should be socially constructed and speak to contemporary issues for it to remain relevant.

In – service teachers offered their contributions and summarised as:

> *As academics, lecturers, when they do their professional work to plan the programme, there are a number of areas they may not be sure of in terms of emphasis, suitable content etc. We are experienced teachers and we are on the ground when it comes to challenges posed by Covid – 19. As we come for in – service training we expect to gain knowledge and skills that help us deal with emerging realities. University curricula should quickly adapt and adopt to such situations as everyone looks up to us to be change agents. Everyone thinks we have new knowledge on how to deal with topical problems.*

In – service teacher professional development discourses should be anchored on appropriate, relevant and responsive education curriculum to respond to all issues in education including disasters, diseases and emergencies (Shereen et al 2020). Unpacking what is considered to be a relevant in – service curriculum should assist students explore what works and does not in real new teaching – learning situations. The implications of these findings are that the in – service teacher development curriculum at the university had not empowered the teachers in knowledge, skills and pedagogy to meaningfully function during these crisis period. The teachers argued that programme implementation could be effective if it had been opened up to new, innovative ideas and initiatives. From the teachers' comments, the programme had failed in meeting its highest end as an intervention programme to deal with critical teacher practice gaps. What they learnt was isolated from what was relevant during the Covid – 19 pandemic periods.
Lecturers agreed that there was no timely innovative response to help in – service students to deal with the instructional difficulties caused by Covid – 19. The lecturers admitted that the module content remained the same, instructional approaches only changed to online and there was no effort to address the new challenges the education sector was facing.

Lecturer 3 and 4 observed:

> *Covid – 19 pandemic caught us by surprise and the thinking was that it was not going to last long hence there was no need to panic and change the curriculum. It would have been premature to start changing a lot of things in the midst of semesters. We thought it was prudent to see where the wind was blowing as it were rather than rushing to effect any curriculum changes. Any changes required a thorough appreciation of the critical issues that needed to be addressed.*

The analysis of the data points to a gap between in – service teachers and lecturers in the Covid – 19 pandemic response discourse. Shifting the mindset of lecturers to a more constructive engagement with in - service to ensure a quick appropriate response to Covid- 19 pandemic appeared difficult to achieve and practise yet in – service teachers from their narratives appeared ready. Lecturers felt planning and implementing any changes in the curriculum requiring that all stakeholders take due diligence in arriving at strategic changes that impart relevant knowledge and skills to solve emerging problems. Havenga (2015) understands that any new programme to meet the demands of the new knowledge systems requires checking errors, making corrections, testing and executing the programme which cannot be done in the shortest possible period.

In this case there was a need to mutually and constructively shared and exchanged ideas in developing and applying knowledge and skills in the in - service programme to address real teaching and learning challenges. Both parties needed to realise that the educational landscape, as a result of the Covid – 19 pandemic is constantly changing and evolving creating new problems and circumstances that require urgent redress.

**Challenges to in – service teachers' involvement**

The narrative around developing a Covid – 19 response programme for the teachers has received considerable critical attention yet Farrell, Salchak, Kane and Dube (2015) note that it is easy to promote but difficult to implement. The consensus between the in - service teachers and lecturers has seen challenges in operationalising and formalising the curriculum reform practices relevant to the Covid – 19 crisis situation. The findings point to the absence of academic ways of incorporating in – service students' lived teaching challenges during the Covid – 19 period with lecturers remaining in their old comfort zones of teaching the traditional curriculum.

A lecturer (L4) remarked:

> *It is a brilliant idea on paper to change the curriculum to respond to the Covid – 19 pandemic but difficult and complicated to implement in real practical situations. Curriculum change cannot happen over night no matter the circumstance. It also raises a number of questions about the in – service teacher's capacity and preparedness to be meaningfully involved.*

The lecturer sentiments created a system that had no respect and place for in – service teachers' ideas and contributions to a programme that should benefit them in their execution of their duties. Yet, the in – service teacher professional development concept was premised on practising teachers' continuous learning, updating knowledge and pedagogical skills to keep abreast with competitive, contemporary and ever -changing educational terrain. This could only be achieved and sustained in an environment where lecturers and in – service teachers view each other as co – constructors of knowledge.

Regulations and module outlines provide the epistemological support to provide opportunities to facilitate the learning of relevant content consistent with the new demands caused by Covid- 19 pandemic. The university system socialisation is that the change of these curriculum implementation documents cannot be done at individual lecturer level but influenced by management and has to pass through Senate for approval. Lecturer 1, 3,5 (L1,L3 & L5) observed:

> *Everyone saw the challenges posed by Covid – 19 pandemic to the education system and how it was critical to develop intervention measures in our teaching to professionally equip in – service teachers with requisite skills to handle the pandemic. The pandemic was new and lecturers needed more research time to develop appropriate interventions. They too did not have solutions.*

However other lecturers (Lecturer 2 & 4) disagreed*:*

> *With module outlines, which are lecturer generated, it was possible to infuse content and strategies that would help these teachers in curriculum implementation during the crisis times. We lacked institutional support in terms of resources.*

The programme remained university driven. From the findings, the lecturers at the university were challenged by the pandemic hence could not make any meaningful curriculum change and innovation to help students with knowledge and skills to effectively work during the pandemic. There was need to refresh the programme to respond to the pandemic challenges with close consultation with the in – service students. This brings in the weight of social interaction as espoused by Vygotsky (1978) in that the interaction is important for meaningful learning. The finding was also corroborated by Harlow and Cobb (2014) who point out that this lack of consultation could lead to an unrealistic and underdeveloped conception of the programme, professional roles and responsibilities, resulting in praxis shock. Further, Farooq (2016) concluded that teachers who stay up to date with the latest teaching techniques are always efficient.

The consequence and implications of this was that regulations and module content did not reflect and connect contextually to relevant situations of primary school classroom. The teachers in focus group discussion voiced their concerns as:

> *Some of the content we learn is really does not fit the purpose and does not connect with our professional challenges posed by Covid – 19 pandemic. The programme completely ignores the fact that Covid – 19 exists and has changed the content and how education should be provided.*

It was these sentiments that show little attention given to the programme and ignored aspects deemed important by in – service teachers to address issues caused by Covid – 19 pandemic. This gap can be closed when the in - service teachers and lecturers make engagement their core function in using the curriculum to address current problems posed by the pandemic. The challenge has been lecturers who have not opened up the educational space and opportunities for in – service teachers to contribute real - life experiences onto the programme. Driscoll, Lambirth and Roden (2013) lament a situation where lecturers were part of a workforce who used prescriptions without thought, routine teaching without justification, and curriculum change without rationale. This may result in an in - service programme that suited university situations rather than that responded to primary school teacher needs during crisis periods. The lecturers did not focus on investing in building the primary school teacher's total educational experiences that directly addressed their classroom challenges as a result of the pandemic.

The findings explain a slow university response system to curriculum reform. There was lack of programme coherence and commitment to innovation to continuously connect with primary school teaching and learning in a manner that adds value. Day (2004) recognises the need for university curricula to demonstrate a readiness to encourage all stakeholders to experiment with new ideas to ensure authentic learning that speak to the needs of teachers and learners. Most of the challenges the programme and the problems the in – service teachers faced could have been avoided if Vygotsky's (1978) idea of socially constructed knowledge and participation by all the stakeholders in organised educational and cultural activities had been taken into account. Sharing Covid – 19 ideas with in – service teachers would not have allowed lecturers to disenfranchise them; rather together they would have interpreted their experiences and acted upon them, ultimately coming up with an improved programme. Failure to dialogue had created a chain of events that had negatively affected the quality and implementation of the primary in – service programme at the university during this pandemic period. The in – service teachers were relegated to the

fringes of the university curriculum debate, yet they stood to benefit from an appropriate primary in – service professional development programme that responded to their needs during Covid - 19.

## Conclusion

Mainstreaming some aspects of crisis management in the in – service teacher development curricula and pedagogy to ensure relevant content and strategies to handle challenges posed by Covid – 19 pandemic would have been a noble idea. The university appeared to emphasise on knowledge accumulation that was not very relevant to the teachers during this crisis period. The study concludes that what had not been achieved is the balance between building the in – service teachers' professional capacities to deal with emergencies caused by Covid – 19 pandemic through their voices and the lecturers' academic expertise. The question of control of the programme appeared the area of contestation and shifting boundaries to accommodate new ideas appeared difficult. As a result of this gap, the programme had remained theoretical with very little impact on the in – service knowledge and skills needs during the crisis period. Yet, the spirit of in – service was to find new meaning, practical knowledge and skills that were of immediate relevance and testable in real primary school teaching and learning contexts. The article demonstrated the need for lecturers and in – service teachers to invest a lot of time in engagement to exchange ideas and build an in - service programme that mutually support and strengthen primary school teaching and learning during such times.

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