Zimbabwe primary teachers’ 2-5-2 training programme: A dilemma for female students: A case study of three Government Teachers’ Colleges

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Abstract
The study aimed at assessing the benefits and challenges of the 2-5-2 primary teacher education programme to female students. The study adopted a case study design. Interviews and document analysis were used to gather data from the respondents. Document analysis was used to get evidence to substantiate the statistics on drop outs, failures and withdrawals, deferrals and repeating students, due to stress. The sample consisted of a purposive sample of 60 female students, that is, 20 from each of the three colleges, A, B and C. Three principals, three vice principals and three deans of students formed part of the sample. Results revealed that most female students get pregnant within the duration of the 5 terms of their teaching practice, (TP), hence, find it very stressful to cope with college work, motherhood and family responsibilities. It was also noted that from two of the colleges, most of the students preferred to stay out of college residence owing to pressure from their spouses hence fail to balance school and home responsibilities. One college had the highest level of divorce and adultery cases due to separation between spouses. In spite of these challenges, the programme had some positive aspects for female students, such as having more time with their families while on TP especially those who are married. The TP allowances assisted their families and most of them save money for their following term’s fees. The study recommends colleges using the 2-5-2 programme to include smart, flexible relationship topics in their guidance and counseling in first year curriculum to help students cope with relationships. In other words, the colleges should put in place some counseling mechanisms at college level to help students during their health and life skills workshops. The colleges should also include handouts and modules for non-examinable areas in their distant education material to guide students.

Key words: Primary teacher, 2-5-2 programme, female students

Introduction
Despite the numerous researches on teacher education in Zimbabwe, there is still considerable debate on the dropouts and failure rates of students on teaching practice. As a lecturer at one of the primary school teacher training colleges that uses the 2-5-2 programme, the researcher observed that most female students at that college come from extreme situations.

The Programme 2-5-2 is called the Zimbabwe Integrated National Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC). It was established in 1981 to address teacher shortage as more pupils were enrolled into primary school immediately after Zimbabwe attained independence in April 1980. It was seen as the most effective method of training primary school teachers at the time because training is done ‘on the job’, and the government devotes less money for the Zintec student upkeep since the student spends more time teaching in schools as compared to the conventional student. The programme produces teachers with a strong practical
teaching background and gives the student teacher a longer period to test theories on the ground. The programme may be the major contributor to the paradigm of teacher education by the black people of Zimbabwe and, therefore, represents one of their greatest initiatives and achievements in the field of education.

Information on relationships and marriage is key for student teachers on teaching practice in primary teachers’ colleges with double roles of student and parent or bread winner at the same time. During their first year, some students commit themselves to emotionally binding relationships. Hence, some of them get engaged, or get married thinking that passion is the aspect for stable marriage (Niehuis, Skogran and Huston, 2005).

There is very little literature that addresses the causes of stress, divorce and failure rate for students during their training. What is known from their college syllabus is only the empowerment women get from the training in general. Students’ romantic relationships in the first two terms in college, five terms on teaching practice or the last two terms after teaching practice are the strongest predictors of students’ well-being indicators such as self-esteem, independence, depression, suicide attempts and course completion.

Theoretical framework

This paper is informed by humanistic philosophy and Africana Womanism. Humanistic philosophy is premised on the need to create an educated individual with love, caring and well-rounded character. Humanistic philosophy assumes that human nature is intrinsically good and that the self has potential to growth and self-actualisation (Knowles, 1980). Humanism also emphasises the need to help and develop capacity as articulated in the interviewee’s answers. Teacher training takes a lot of skill and patience and involves constant work and growth that an individual needs to consider personally (Knowles, 1980). Lecturers in teachers’ colleges therefore, are facilitators of this growth and are career guiding mentors to all students. A college, school and the community traditionally promote peace, unity, love, care and security.

The other theory, Africana womanism is a term that was first coined by a woman called Clenora Hudson-Weems in the late 1980s. It is an ideology applicable to all women of African descent in the diaspora. It is grounded in African culture and Afrocentricism and focuses on the experiences, struggles, needs and desires of an African woman. It cherishes the important roles that a woman of African descent plays in the family in particular and society in general. It is not like other sexist approaches such as feminism or womanism. The sexist approaches endeavour to wrestle women from the perception they get from man while according to Hudson-Weems, an Africana woman embodies and cherishes her African cultural values and roles. Hudson-Weems (1998) goes on to idealise an Africana woman as a woman with the following characteristics; self-namer, self-definer, family-centred, genuine in sisterhood, strong, mothering, nurturing, adaptable, ambitious, male compatible, respectful, recognised, whole, flexible role player, authentic and in concert with male in struggle. However, before making an appraisal of the female students, it is crucial to mention that Hudson-Weems’s background was based on a person who was transposed in a foreign land as an African American whose main struggle was segregation. There is, therefore, a chance of differing with a resident African woman.

The student teachers were faced with typical family challenges to a large extent and social challenges in general. The characters involved in the study demonstrated different degrees of strength ranging from those who
are assertive to those who were flexible as they confront challenges of life just like what an African woman should do. An African woman does not fight man but work together with man supporting him for the good of the family. She is family centered and accommodates other women in her marriage. Research shows that student teachers grow, learn, and benefit most when their tutors communicate openly, clearly and honestly about events and relationships, keep open communication and utilise the resources available to them in the colleges, in schools and the community (Knowles, 1980). Lecturers are supposed to act in loco-parentis to all their students and are the nurturers of the student teachers thereby supporting their emotional growth and stability.

The problem

At independence, Zimbabwe adopted the education for all policy that enabled most school leavers to go back to school (Nziramasanga Commission, 1999 and Education Act, 1996). This increased the enrolment figures in schools hence a demand for more teachers. This is why the ZINTEC system was adopted by the government. It is called a 2-5-2 system meaning that students will have two terms at college then five terms on teaching practice, (TP), with some allowances, then the last two terms at college. The five terms on teaching practice are being assumed by most female students as resting time and family time. They think that there is less work for them yet this is the most demanding and loaded period of the programme. The period calls for up to date schemes of work for the eleven subjects, daily detailed lesson plans which should be evaluated every day, media for each lesson, well maintained classrooms with enough media displayed in all areas, up to date records and participation on core curriculum activities. Furthermore, the period demands college assignments for the eleven subjects and the research project. As a result most colleges have recorded lower academic pass rates among their female students, hence the need for this research to find out the challenges faced by female students.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine how the 2-5-2 programme was perceived by female students. The objectives of the study were to:
1. establish how female student teachers perceive the 2-5-2 primary teacher training programme.
2. investigate the roots of such perceptions and how they affect the 2-5-2 programme.
3. find out the challenges female students face with this type of training.
4. suggest how colleges can improve the programme.

Research questions

The major research questions that guided the study were as follows:
1. Why do female students chose to train as primary school teachers?
2. How do they perceive the 2-5-2 programme and why?
3. What are the challenges faced by female student teachers using 2-5-2 programme?
4. What are the root causes of these problems?
5. What are the possible solutions which can be used by colleges to make the programme user friendly?

Methodology

The research used qualitative research procedures to collect and analyse data mainly through focus group discussions, interviews,
Qualitative research was chosen mainly because it focuses on the process rather than the product, looking at people’s (students in this case) experiences and views about the progression. This enabled the researcher to study the concept in the students’ natural setting and to make sense and interpret the phenomena in terms of meaning from participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, Magwa and Magwa, 2012). The researcher benefited from the approach because she gained an insight into the participants’ attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns and aspirations. She later realised that there is no single reality in the subject under investigation (Ahmed, Aastraf and Haider, 2011). The researcher used a case study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin 2003), to get a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation Creswell (2007) and Punch (2009). The researcher used face to face interviews because they are flexible and they offer the researcher the chance to use several sensory channels such as verbal, non-verbal, as well as getting the true feelings and attitudes of respondents (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The interviewer was able to detect and exploit instances such as slip of the tongue, hence enable the respondent to clarify issues. Direct open ended questions were also used in interviews. These included warm up questions to give respondents a soft landing.

Observations were also used to collect data. These focused on the behaviour of student teachers and their lecturers during lessons/lectures. In addition to the interviews and observations, the researcher also used and analysed statistics provided by the three principals, the vice principals and the deans of students on their enrolment, drop outs and deferments as well as repeating students. The interviews and observations were meant to complement each other, that is, to achieve triangulation. They both have strengths and weaknesses such that weaknesses of each mode of data generation tend to make up for the other co-employed technique.

Sample and sampling procedures

A sample of 60 students was employed in the study. Second and third year students were purposively selected due to their being on teaching practice, in the same district. The first year students at colleges were randomly selected. All these students were interviewed. The researcher involved female students from the general course and the ECD course, from the three intakes of each college. All students were asked open-ended questions.

The researcher thought that the three intakes from each college (classes of 2014, 2015 and 2016) were interesting groups to work with since they could have opted to go to universities such as Great Zimbabwe University, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe Open University, Reformed Church University, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University and Women University in Africa, for block release courses.

Results and discussion

The three colleges revealed that they had overwhelming responses on enrolment for those who had five ordinary level with grades ‘C’ or better including Mathematics and English. As such, they had selection tests for their intakes in all these years. It should be noted that the colleges had an increasing number of aspiring candidates each year, such that in 2016, due to stiff competition, they raised the entry requirements so as to come up with their list for the class of that year. These colleges are all government teachers’ training colleges with reasonable and affordable fees. The students were all asked why they chose primary school teaching as a career.
They gave different justifications such as:
1. my husband as my sponsor forced me,
2. I wanted to help my children with homework,
3. I can open my own ECD place after training,
4. I had no choice, this was the only open and running industry in the country,
5. I love children,
6. I am too old for other courses,
7. I could not enrol elsewhere because of my symbols and three sittings.

Table 1 shows that female students are more than male students in all the three colleges.
Table 2 shows that not all students who joined to train as primary schools teachers were married. For the Class of 2014 in their first year, 13 were married and 7 were single. Some of the single students got married in their first year or on teaching practice, increasing the number of married students to 20 in the second year. In their 3rd year, a total of 14 students were married. The students gave the following as some of their reasons for getting married:

Table 1: Student enrolment by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016 (1st years)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 (2nd years)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 (3rd years)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>095</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 (1st years)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 (2nd years)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 (3rd years)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 (1st years)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 (2nd years)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 (3rd years)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Marital status of selected student teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Married Females</th>
<th>Single or single parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1 (1st years)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1 (1st years)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (2nd years)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1 (1st years)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (2nd years)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 (3rd years)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. It was an experiment. All my friends were married so I wanted to establish a sense of identity.
2. I wanted to strengthen my relationship with my boyfriend. Marrying him was the only way I thought would prove to him how much I loved him.
3. We were three of us as his girlfriends, so I did not want to lose him to the other two ladies that is why I had to move in with him. Now I am his wife.
4. I married him to avoid conflicts between us because he used to accuse me of cheating on him.
5. I did not want to get pregnant before he paid my lobola, so I married him the second week I moved out of my brother’s house and he paid for me the following month. He used to visit me here and sleep over.
6. I was pregnant for him.
7. I felt that he was the right man for me and that was the right time for me to start my own family.
8. He paid all my expenses so I married him as a way of thanking him.
9. His mother is my head and my landlord, so to show my gratitude I married him.

The class of 2014, who are now in their final year, had only 10 female married students out of the 16 in their second year. This means that six female students who are out of marriage are either divorced or separated. This group gave the following reasons for the marriage breakdown as:

1. He used to say that I now love my course more than him that’s why I left him so that I can finish my course and be someone in life.
2. He fell in love with the new student from another college who is much younger than me, so I wanted to show him that I can now take care of myself.
3. I gave birth to a physically challenged child and he left me.
4. He failed to pay for my upkeep.

Challenges faced by student teachers

Literature has shown that learning about oneself and how to relate effectively with real life situations begins when one starts a career. Kuttler and La Grec (2004) state that it is important for people (students in this case) to understand how their experiences with their peers help them to prepare for love relationships. Noller and Feency (1998) cited in Kerelman (2012) also state that some behaviours, beliefs and emotions that are related to love relationships and marriages are within couples before they get married. This reflects that such aspects are from their peers. Students from the three colleges had different attitudes and beliefs in their first years at college which were either positively or negatively affected by their interactions with other peers. The love relationships or general friendships of student teachers at colleges did influence students’ career plans and aspirations to the extent that some of them supported and or discouraged their dreams and goals as teachers on training. As such, it is important to learn that the student teachers as adults should understand how these peer relationships help them prepare for their career and future.

The behaviour of most students during their first year term in college is in most cases different from what they portray on Teaching Practice. They gave some challenges which they said are part of their change of behaviour such as:

1. Financial problems and budgeting
2. The concept of distant education as implied in 2-5-2 programme
3. Marital conflicts
4. Teaching resources
5. Emotions and too much college work
6. Risks and abuse from partners and society at large, and
7. The double role of being a student and a mother and or a wife in one day
Many of these student teachers, especially women, do not realise that conflicts in marriages or love relationships are unavoidable, hence have higher rates of breaking the relationships or getting out of that marriage. The researcher observed that some students get involved in a relationship during their first term in college then break up the following term mainly because of conflicts. A student would have another relationship again in term two of the same year which she/he will terminate in first term of teaching practice on the grounds that as lovers they failed to agree on the choice of school for teaching practice, or the female student was caught double crossing the partner with a working man. The same student would then choose a working man for the 5 terms on teaching practice and then break the relationship when going back to college for her final residential term if the partner fails to support her. They enter in relationships for material gains. According to Kerpelman (2012), emotions are the main cause of getting out of a relationship at any stage. As such, students need help to understand, manage and balance their emotions and education so as to avoid poor and wrong choices. Larson, Clore, and Wood, (1999) state that both negative and positive emotions are found in most women when studying. Those student teachers who fail to cope with the negative emotions tend to be depressed, suicidal, withdrawn, violent, abusive, drug addicts, use alcohol and opt for deferrals dropping out of the course.

Often, dating relationships or marriage for someone undertaking some studies are of short periods mainly because the person studying would be failing to balance his or her education and love relationship. These two concepts (relationships and education) demand the client’s dedication, seriousness and devotion. Most students especially women fail to balance these two (love and education). The husbands of student teachers who are of different status and jobs, such as drivers, managers, security staff, vendors, uniformed forces, are their sponsors. By the time they go through lessons in professional studies, theories of education and health and life skills at college, they get enlightened on survival skills which some student teachers misinterpret as if they were being abused or mistreated by their spouses. The student teachers’ concerns with, and the abilities to manage issues relevant to formation of long life marriages and or love relationship, their lack of accurate information and effective skills, tend to increase the female student teacher’s risk of poor decision making and negative outcomes (Kerpelman, 2012).

From the interviews held by the researcher and some of the students, the respondents gave the following responses.
(Text unedited)

- **This is my third relationship since I started teacher training. I had to break the other two because of some misunderstandings we had. I was looking for a man with the same status like me, a teacher of course who will respect me as a fellow teacher not just a house wife.**

- **I failed to balance my duties as a mother, wife and a student so I took my child to my mother’s place and that was the end of my marriage. My husband failed to accept the fact that I was now training to get a diploma which he did not have so he started accusing me of not respecting him as a driver.**

- **My husband thought that I was just being lazy or did not want to do my house wife duties because nearly every evening I would work till late hours doing my assignments or personal notes.**

Female students are also failing to balance their social lives and the demands of the programme 2-5-2. In their first year, student teachers are expected to pass all the subjects so as to proceed for teaching practice while their families and spouses demand their full
attention either as wives or mothers. Some female student teachers staying out of college residence fail to balance these family responsibilities of (roles of motherhood/being a wife) in the evening and that of a student teacher at college in day time. The student teacher role demands that the student attends lessons and works throughout the day then research writing assignments in the evening while their role as wives demands taking care of the family and the husband throughout the evening. This triggers jealous, anger, longing and grief in female student teachers and or in their family and partners. On teaching practice, most women get pregnant in order to fulfil their love for their partners as per society’s expectations for women. Most of these students teachers fail to balance the demands of the pregnancy and the 2-5-2 programme. The programme demands the student teacher to be on the station every day, ready for supervision with enough detailed lesson plans for the day. They are also expected to have evaluated previous plans with accurate and up to date documents, focused and educative teaching media, enough educative displayed media in all teaching areas, up to date records and well covered pupils’ exercise books with standard marking and communicative comments. In the afternoons student teachers are also expected to be actively involved in all school activities. They are also supposed to read modules and carry out research Curriculum Depth Study, (CDS), during the same period.

One 24 year old female general course student gave the following response on failing to balance the time during the interviews;

My husband thought that I was going to leave him so he forced me to get pregnant as a sign of my commitment to our marriage. As you can see I am heavily pregnant but I have a problem now. I am not as active as my friends here. So I am always behind on college work even my detailed lesson plans are behind.

Most mentors do not like me in their classrooms that is why I was given to the T.I.C. I also have health problems so I do visit the local clinic almost every week. The nurse advised me to rest but for me to have this diploma I have to work. I am failing to do any research at night because that is when I am expected to rest. Last week the lecturers came while I had gone for my check up and assessed my documents for the second time. They said I should have lesson observations for the next assessments for me to pass but I am afraid because I am now supposed to go on maternity leave in the next two weeks.

Student teachers are also failing to manage their finances hence some of them opt to defer the course. After receiving their teaching practice allowances, some student teachers spend all their allowances forgetting that they need to save for their fees. The best scenario would be to save for their final residential fees, so that they can help their spouses and guardians. In some cases, some of these student teachers are bread winners and their families are looking forward to them for help financially. In a bid to please their families, and to create an identity and a name for themselves, the student teachers neglect their fees hence get involved in materialistic love affairs.

One student has this to say on failing to balance her finances:

I am looking after my mother and my two young sisters in grade 4 and grade 6 respectively. My father is late and my mother used most of our goats to pay for my mathematics lessons. The allowance I am getting now is the only source of income that we have as a family which is not enough for all of us. But am happy now because I am in a relationship with someone who
seems to understand where I am coming from. My boyfriend is the one who pays for all our upkeep and I hope to get married to him after graduating. At least I can manage to look for a man of my status and own choice.

The student teachers are involved in romantic relationships and marriages in different ways. They gave different reasons why they are in and out of relationships and marriages. There is need therefore, to remind student teachers that they are expected to be role models in the classroom, school and community at large. As such, their relationships and marriages should involve positive moral issues. Those who said they married because of material gains from spouses revealed their personality as materialistic which culturally does not reflect someone who does have true love. That student teacher, who marries or is involved in a relationship with a married man knowingly, is in most cases deemed materialistic. The Shona society allows room for men to have more than one wife (Tatira, 2010), but the man should seek consent of his first wife after giving clear and valid reasons. The second wife would be expected to respect the first wife for allowing her to share her husband whether that first wife is educated or not. The idea of woman assessing the potential of man to take good care of them is a characteristic feature of Zimbabwean women. Women often marry a man with a lot of wealth, be it cattle, a good farmer or a famous hunter.

One student gave the following response on why she opted to be a second wife:

Yes this is my second marriage and the man is loaded. He is responsible for all my upkeep and pays for my mother’s rentals in Mufakose with my two children. He is married yes but I am not bothered about that. All I want is someone who can take care of me. He is older than me meaning that he has experience in family affairs and knows how to treat a woman. Being a second wife to me is not a problem, because all men cheat in one way or another so to be a second wife is better because you know where you stand than to be just a girlfriend. He paid my lobola to my uncle and my mother was happy about it after two unregistered marriages I had before. At least I am Mrs Someone now and my children have a father figure in their lives.

Another challenge given by students is that of shortage of teaching material/resources. Students are failing to use their environment effectively in their lessons hence they have a misconception that there is too much work on teaching practice. They are failing to balance their social life, leisure and education hence the feeling that there is too much work. What the students are forgetting is that teaching material is not that which they should make from material bought from shops. Real objects are the best media and one media can be used for different subjects depending on the teacher’ creativity. They lack resourcefulness, imagination and creativity.

**Lessons learnt**

The study broadened the knowledge base for purposes of informing theory and practice of college life for female students and other stakeholders by illuminating problems encountered by female student teachers under the 2-5-2 programme. Balancing one’s social and academic life is very important for keeping social order in a family, school and community and in one’s career. There is need to recognise and maintain the balance through hard work in terms of attaching same value to one’s academic and social life. In Shona society, women are the main architects
in the making and re-making of the family, school and society at large (musha mukadzi translated (the success of a home lies in the hands of a woman). Men and women are “inextricably bound together”. As explained by Hudson-Weems (2004, p83), “African-centred solution to…African male-female relationships…Such solutions are grounded in three key interconnecting components: the centrality of family, the love and respect for each other, and the commitment to the struggle for ultimate survival.” The double role like parenthood and student for a woman in life, speaks to the fact that the growth of a nation, self-actualisation, socialisation and upbringing of children, is an inclusive undertaking informed by responsible participation of the female teacher. The female student teacher should therefore thrive on the recognition that she needs to balance her roles. This raises awareness to the fact that the “personal relationship between the Africana couple be perfected if the family unit constituting the overall Africana community is to survive” (Hudson-Weems (1998) and Hudson-Weems, 2004, p82).

**Conclusion**

The main reasons for the misconception of the programme (why female students face challenges with 2-5-2) are due to the influence of education and the economic situation in the country. Zimbabwean women have misinterpreted empowerment. They cannot cope with the new environment of education and family responsibilities. The extended family and cultural ties which were believed to unite marriages no longer do so since family ties are certainly loosening and cultures changing. This becomes a dilemma for the female student teacher who wants to be empowered yet empowerment comes with responsibilities. The female students are forced to adapt to an alien interpreted culture of empowerment. Instead of balancing their double role (as bread winners and wives) and being pillars of their marriages and manage all challenges in life, it can be concluded that female teachers are now proud, independent and misinterpret empowerment (vava varume pachavo).

**Recommendations**

Four recommendations from the study were that:

1. Colleges to include social moral topics in their health and life skills and guidance and counselling lessons.
2. Colleges to increase the number of workshops on the creation of teaching materials for the 2-5-2 programme in form of modules and or call for more workshops and seminars for their students as they are the crucial methods for the 2-5-2 programme.
3. The government to re-introduce loans for students then bond them after training.
4. Engage other professional organisations that can give knowledge on life issues in general so that students are equipped to undertake challenging programmes like the 2-5-2.

**References**

