



An investigation into preparation of Chalimbana University pre-service students for school teaching experience

Maurice Moono¹, Crispin Maambo², Gibson Mweemba³

¹ School of Humanities, Department of Psychology, Chalimbana University, Zambia

² School of Education, Department of Special Education, Guidance and Counseling, Zambia

³ Kitwe College of Education, Kitwe, Zambia

Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the preparation of Chalimbana university pre-service students for School Teaching Experience (STE). The objectives of the study were to; establish whether Chalimbana University pre-service students are adequately prepared for STE; identify challenges students face during SE and to determine the support they received during STE.

A descriptive survey design was used in conducting this research. The sample consisted 59 male students and 41 female students. In selecting the participants for this study, simple random sampling techniques was used. This study used the questionnaire and focus group discussion. The quantitative data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences computer software while the qualitative data was analyzed by coding and grouping the emerging themes.

The study revealed that Chalimbana University students were adequately prepared for STE. The findings showed that 88% of students said that the content they were taught at the university helped them teach effectively during STE. It also emerged that the majority of the students had difficulties in teaching ICT related lessons because this component/ course was not well taught during their training.

As regards to the support received during STE the majority of the students reported that they were given support which included; provision of teaching/learning materials and guidance on how to plan lessons. The study also revealed that they were regularly observed and guided on areas that needed improvement.

Arising from the findings, the study has recommended among others that the Heads of Departments at Chalimbana University must be regularly checking the content coverage to ensure that all study areas are well covered and that the Teaching Practice Committee must write to all schools where students will do their teaching experience so that they are given an opportunity to practice/teach all the subjects to prepare them for teaching all subjects being offered in primary schools.

Keywords: school experience, mentorship, observation

Introduction

Teaching practice is mandatory to all students in the school of education at Chalimbana University. It is believed to be an indispensable component of teacher education in Zambia. First we need to understand what teaching practice involves and its purpose in teacher training process. Marais and Meier (2004, pg22) note that "the term teaching practice represents the range of experience to which student teachers are exposed as they work in the classroom and schools." It is an integral component of teacher training and refers to student placements to schools to practice lesson planning; classroom organization and most importantly classroom teaching. It is an essential part of effective professional training. Kiggudu and Nayimuli (2009) ^[8] view it as a form of work integrated learning that is described as a period of time when students are working in relevant industries to receive specific in-service training in order to apply theory in practice. Thus, it is time spent by student teachers in schools to gain practical teaching experience.

Mentor (1989) argues that school teaching experience provides for the real interface between student teacher and membership of the teaching profession. As student teachers start their internship, the new experience creates a mixture of anticipation, anxiety, and excitement and in some cases

some degree of apprehension in the students. There is usually an excitement of being part of the real classroom setting, of getting to know the pupils, of planning one's work and organizing classroom tasks. For many students on their first school teaching experience, there could be doubts about their ability to cope with unfamiliar situations such as controlling and managing learners or establishing a working relationship with the rest of the teaching staff and of mentors.

Teaching practice gives student teachers an opportunity to put in to practice the theories relating to the principles and practices of education. In an event where students did not get the right content during their training, school teaching experience becomes very stressful.

Statement of the problem

Chalimbana University traces its origin from Jeans School. Which was opened in 1930 in Mazabuka in Southern Province of Zambia, as a training centre for community teachers. It later moved to Chalimbana in Lusaka Province in 1937. In 1970, the institution was renamed to National In-service Teachers College (NISTCOL). The mandate of NISTCOL was to provide in service training for serving teachers. The institution was upgraded to university through

a statutory instrument N0 11 of 2013. In 2015, the university started enrolling pre-service students for the first time. A number of intakes have so far gone on school teaching experience but very little is known about whether the content they learn helps them teach without challenges.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of carrying out this study was to ascertain whether the content Chalimbana university pre-service students learn help them to teach without difficulties during school teaching experience.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Establish whether pre-service Chalimbana students are adequately prepared for school teaching experience.
2. Identify challenges that students face during school teaching experience.
3. Determine support students receive during school experience.

Literature Review

School teaching experience is among the areas that have been heavily researched by educators probably because of its effect in the making of teachers.

Tiilema, smith and Ileshen (2010) are for the view that the school teaching experience is very different from campus based learning in the sense that teaching in the real classroom situation will require the student teacher to resolve various real life situations. Similarly Van Komba and Kiva (2013) ^[16] explains that during school teaching experience student teachers work under the guidance of the practicing teachers so that they may gain teacher skills, strategies and general classroom management. They further argue that school teaching experience is the time when student teachers reflect on their own teaching styles and apply various approaches, strategies on skills with the view to bring out meaningful learning. It is the time to begin to define what type of teachers they will be.

Mubika and Bukaliya (2013) observed that the assessment of student's competencies during teaching practice remain problematic and contentious. Additionally, debate about the assessment of the practice of student teachers often reflect on going philosophical debate about the nature of teacher education and traditional barriers. Derry (2004) ^[19] shares his experiences on teaching practice that although student teachers gain specialized knowledge from class lectures, teaching practice add value to their knowledge when they come into contact with real classroom situation.

Bourdillon (2013) noted that school teaching experience aims beyond just good teacher familiarizing student teachers to a real school situation. The real objectives of school teaching practice are to enable student teacher acquires and develop various competencies such as interpersonal, pedagogical, inter culture and psychological competencies.

According to Cobbolt (2011) ^[4] teaching practice is the time when a student teacher learns how to teach in a real classroom. This is when students teach under close supervision by a mentor and others members of staff assigned to assist the teacher on teaching practice to manage, his or her work. Zeichner (1996) ^[17] believed that pre-service teacher's experiences in the schools also shape their conception about teaching and learning in school contexts as well as their attitudes towards their work and the

children they teach (Hodge, 2002) ^[18].

Zeichner further emphasized that "trainee teacher preparation in that practical classroom knowledge provided by teachers working in their own classroom and schools, expose them to the school and classroom environment and real classroom teaching while there are being trained. In order to attain this purpose both the school and the training institution must have distinct responsibilities if the curriculum is to be coherent for the students.

Nwanekezi, Okoli and Mezieobi (2011) argued that teaching practice has three major connotations namely; the practice of teaching skills, acquisition of the role of the teacher and a whole range of experiences that a student teacher is exposed to in the school, and the practical aspects of the course as distinct theoretical studies.

Methodology

Research Design

According to McCaig (2010) ^[10], a research design is an overarching strategy for unearthing useful answers to research problems. A descriptive survey design was used when conducting this research. Bless and Achola (1988) ^[1] define a descriptive survey design as a mode of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. Since the research sought to collect information about the respondents' opinions on the topic at hand, the descriptive research design was ideal. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection.

Since no single method ever, adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors, multiple methods of observation must be employed; triangulation is now a final methodological rule that should be used in every investigation (Denzin, 1978) ^[5]. The strategy of triangulation was used as a way of cross validation of research findings.

Target Population

A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that are the main focus of scientific inquiry. It is for the benefit of the population that researches are done. However, due to large sizes of populations, researchers often cannot test every individual in the population because it is too expensive and time consuming. This is the reason why researchers rely on sampling (Jaeger, 1997) ^[7].

The population for this study comprised all students at Chalimbana University.

Sample Size

Booyse (2002) ^[2] states that it is impractical to mount survey that include entire target population, hence the sample is drawn that is representative, in that, those included in the sample display the same characteristics as that of a target population. The sample consisted of 100 respondents; 59 male students and 41 female students.

The sample was drawn from third year students because that was the only intake that had just come back from their first school teaching experience.

Sampling Procedures

Simple random sampling procedure was used to select students who participated in this study. This was in order to provide each population element an equal probability of being included in the sample (Bless & Achola, 1988) ^[1].

Research Instruments

In this research, structured questionnaires and focus group discussions were used to collect data. A questionnaire is described by Gillham (2008) [6] as a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Peterson (2006) argues that a questionnaire enables quantitative data to be collected in a standardized way so that the data is internally consistent and coherent for analysis. Focus group discussion was also used when collecting information from teachers and pupils. Mount (2003, p. 14) [13] defines a focus group interview as “a purposive discussion of a specific topic or a set of related topics by eight or twelve individuals with similar backgrounds and common interest.” The purpose of using focus group discussion in this research was to obtain in-depth information on concepts, perceptions, and ideas of the teachers and pupils about guidance and counselling.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher got permission from the University management. The researcher distributed a consent form and questionnaires to the respondents who were sampled and willing to complete them. Enough time was given to the respondents so that they could complete the questionnaires, after which the researcher collected the questionnaires. After collecting the questionnaires, the researcher randomly selected eight (8) students so that they could take part in focus group discussions. During focus group discussions, the researcher moderated all discussions and used a voice recorder so that, the flow of the discussions could not be disturbed. The recorded discussions were later transcribed

and analysed.

Data Analysis

McCaig (2010, P. 45) [10] describes data analysis as “a process that involves organising what you have seen, heard and read, so that you can make sense of what you have learnt.”

The data for this study was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data was analysed using the statistical package for social Sciences (SPSS) computer software to generate tables of frequencies and percentages which were used in describing distributions of the variables. Qualitative data was analysed by coding and grouping the emerging themes. Coding is an interpretative technique that both organises the data and provides a means to introduce the interpretations of it into certain quantitative methods. Most coding requires the analyst to read the data and demarcate segments within it. Each segment is labelled with a "code" – usually a word or short phrase that suggests how the associated data segments inform the research objectives. When coding is complete, the analyst prepares reports via a mix of, summarising the prevalence of codes, discussing similarities and differences in related codes across distinct original sources/contexts, or comparing the relationship between one or more codes (Denzin, 2005) [5].

Results and Discussion

Teaching Methods

Student teachers were asked to indicate whether they were adequately taught various teaching methods before school teaching experience. Table 1: shows their responses.

Table 1: Extent to which Teaching Methods were taught

Programmed	Extent				Total
	Very adequate	Adequate	Not adequate	Not sure	
ECE	1 (1.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Primary Degree	50 (50.0%)	44 (44.0%)	4 (4.0%)	1 (5.0%)	99 (99.0%)
Total	51(51.0%)	44 (44.0%)	4 (4.0%)	1 (1.0%)	100 (100.0%)

Table 1: shows that 51% indicated very adequately prepared in Teaching Methods and 44% were adequately prepared while 4% indicated not adequately prepared and another 1% said were not sure.

The above results reveal that Chalimbana University Students are adequately prepared for school teaching experience. This is depicted by 95% percent of the students who said that they were adequately to very adequately prepared in teaching methodology and other aspects of teaching. These findings are similar to the findings of Cobboit (2011) which revealed that generally higher learning institutions adequately prepare their students well in the area of methodology.

The likely reason for this finding is that, students were taught teaching methods and had peer teaching in all the study areas. This gave them enough opportunity to understand their content and to build confidence in readiness for real classroom practice.

Relevance of Content taught

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the content they were taught helped them during school teaching experience. Figure 1 shows their responses.

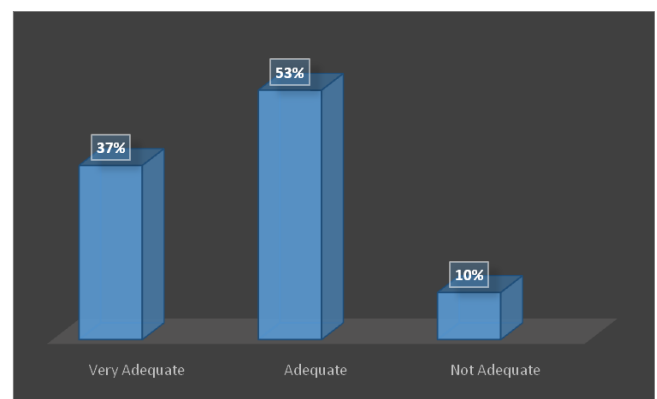


Fig 1: Extent to whether content taught helped them during School teaching experience

Figure1: revealed that 37% were very adequately taught on content. Another category comprising 53% responded that they were adequately prepared while only 1% indicated that they were not adequately prepared.

The study has revealed that 90% of respondents indicated that they were adequately prepared for teaching practice. This is due to the commitment of the teaching staff in

pursuant of excellence as a university core value. These findings are similar to those of Kiggudu and Nayimuli (2009)^[8] that also revealed that student teachers are usually taught relevant content before going for teaching practice.

Whether students were adequately prepared in making Lesson Plans

Students were asked the extent to which they were prepared in making Lesson Plans. Table 2 below shows their responses.

Table 2: Extent to which Lesson Planning was taught

Programmed	Extent				Total
	Very adequate	Adequate	Not adequate	Not sure	
ECE	1 (1.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Primary Degree	67 (67.0%)	25 (25.0%)	5 (5.0%)	2 (2.0%)	99 (99.0%)
Total	68 (68.0%)	25 (25.0%)	5 (5.05)	2 (2.0%)	100 (100.0%)

Table 2 above shows that 68% indicated that they were very adequately prepared with content on how to prepare Lesson Plans to help them in their STP. Another category comprising 25% responded that they were adequately prepared while 5% indicated not adequately prepared leaving only 2% who showed that they were not sure. The above results show that Chalimbana Students were well prepared in lesson planning. This is evident from 93% of

students who said were well prepared in the area of lesson planning.

Whether students were adequately prepared in Classroom Management

Students were asked the extent to which they were prepared in making Lesson Plans. Table 3 below shows their responses.

Table 3: Extent to which Classroom Management were taught

Programmed	Extent				Total
	Very adequate	Adequate	Not adequate	Not sure	
ECE	1 (1.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Primary Degree	35 (35.0%)	44 (44.0%)	15 (15.0%)	5 (5.0%)	99 (99.0%)
Total	36 (36.0%)	44 (44.0%)	15 (15.0%)	2 (2.0%)	100 (100.0%)

Table 3 above shows that 36% indicated that they were very adequately prepared with content on how to prepare Classroom Management to help them in their STE. Another category comprising 44% responded that they were

adequately prepared while 15% indicated not adequately prepared leaving only 2% who showed that they were not sure.

Whether students were adequately prepared in making and using Teaching/Learning Aids

Table 4: Extent to which Teaching Aids were taught

Programmed	Extent				Total
	Very adequate	Adequate	Not adequate	Not sure	
ECE	1 (1.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (1.0%)
Primary Degree	64 (35.0%)	33(33.0%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	99 (99.0%)
Total	65 (65.0%)	33 (33.0%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	100 (100.0%)

Table 4 above shows that majority of students 65% indicated that they were very adequately prepared on how to make and use teaching/learning aids to help them in their STE. Another category comprising 33% responded that they were adequately prepared while only 1% indicated not adequately prepared and another1% who showed that they

were not sure.

Whether content taught helped them during STP

Students were asked the extent to which content they were taught helped them during STE. Table 10 below shows their responses.

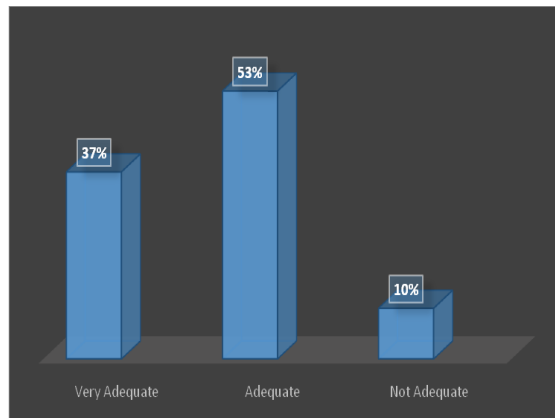


Fig 2: Extent to whether content taught helped them during STE

Figure 2 above shows that 37% indicated that they were very adequately taught on conduct of a teacher to help them in their STE. Another category comprising 53% responded that they were adequately prepared while only 1% indicated not adequately prepared.

Challenges students face during STE

The study revealed that students faced a wide array of challenges such as:

1. Not being observed because their schools were in very rural areas that were difficult to access.
2. The ICT related lessons/component/course was not well taught during their training hence student teachers had challenges teaching ICT related lessons during STE.
3. In some schools the students were not given an opportunity to teach all the subjects. Some students said they were given only two (2) subjects to teach. This made them not to gain experience in some subjects.
4. Students indicated that it was very difficult to mark and to teach effectively due to over enrolment in most schools.
5. Some teachers over loaded some students with work making it difficult for some students to effectively teach.
6. In some departments at the university, there are no primary school text books. During peer teaching students use grade 8 or 9 books and are advised to downgrade the content to primary level.
7. Some teachers who are Diploma holders were not very supportive to the student teachers. The sense of inferiority might have been at play in some cases because the respondents who were on teaching practice were doing a degree programme.

Support students received during school teaching experience

The study revealed that students were given support during their teaching practice such as teaching and learning materials, guidance on how to plan lessons and were regularly observed and guided on areas that needed improvement. Some students were given allowances in some schools and that others were integrated in extra curriculum activities.

Provision of mentorship Mentor

Students were asked to indicate whether they were assigned a mentor during school experience. Figure 2 shows their responses.

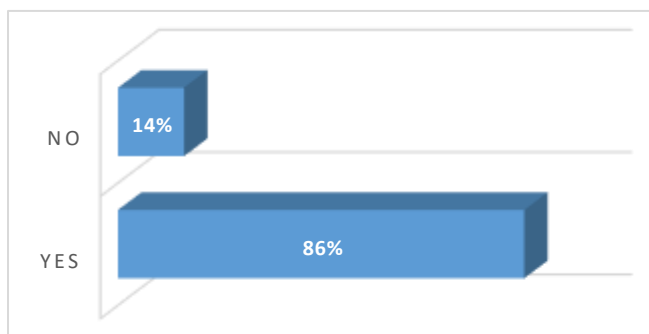


Fig 3: A mentor assigned during teaching practice

Figure 3 above shows that 86% indicated that they had a mentor who helped them in their STE. Only 14% indicated that they had none.

It emerged from the study that 86% of the students were assigned to mentors while on school teaching experience. The explanation for this outcome is that the Ministry of General Education encourages mentorship of new and inexperienced teacher.

Conclusion

The results show that students were adequately prepared for STE in key areas of teaching such as schemes of work, lesson planning and teaching methodology in spite some challenges during their STP ranging from insufficient knowledge in ICT, overcrowded classrooms, work overload and lack of teaching and learning aids in some cases.

As regards to support given, they were regularly observed and guided on what to do and given teaching materials by their mentors.

Recommendations

- Heads of Departments at CHAU must be regularly checking the content coverage to ensure that all study areas are well covered.
- The teaching practice committee must ensure that observations made by mentors (marks) are added to the lecturers’ observation so that a global mark is calculated.
- The teaching practice committee must write to all schools where students will do their teaching practice so that they are given an opportunity to practice/teach all the subjects.

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