

Reforming School Experience in Pre-Service Teacher Preparation for Quality Teacher Graduates

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Abstract

It is well a known fact that quality teaching is key to learning. This means that the quality of schools depends largely on teachers. In the same way, the quality of teachers depends on the institutions that prepared them. Therefore, school experience in pre-service teacher preparation is central because, it is during the practicum that trainees are given an opportunity to apply theories that they learnt and also observe experienced teachers' lessons. It is also during practicum that trainee teachers are availed an occasion to work with real learners (pupils). In this vein, then, there is need to have a school experience which is effective. This can only occur if it is properly structured, well financed and adequately staffed. This paper will provide a situational analysis of the common practices of school experience at the University of Zambia. The problematisation of the situation will be followed by arguing for elements which make school experience in pre-service teacher preparation effective and responsive to the demands of 21st century didactics. Some of the elements will include the restructuring of the practicum, adequate financing and relooking at practicum implementation needs. The paper will conclude by reiterating the fact

that the quality of teachers in schools (and lack of it) is largely a result of the nature of the school experience they underwent. Finally, the paper will submit a suggestion for a rethink and reformation of school experience in Zambia if the goal of producing quality teacher graduates is to be realised.

Key Words: teacher training, teacher education, school experience, teaching practice, teacher educator, and mentor.

Situational Analysis: Context of the Study

In Zambia, teachers undergo either University training (to obtain a degree in teaching a particular subject) which takes four years, or College training (to obtain a secondary or primary diploma) which takes three years. In both cases, trainee teachers learn teaching methods courses and content subjects. During the course of study, they also go for teaching practice during which time, the student teachers practice teaching in a real classroom situation as part of learning. Hence, teaching practice is considered a very important part of teacher training in Zambia.

The country also has private teacher training institutions. However, as Beyani (2013) observed, the government has no complete autonomy over these colleges. This was further supported by Mkandawire and Ilon (2018) when they indicated that the autonomy and self-accountability of learning institutions in Zambia is more prominent in private institutions that fund themselves with little or no control from government. They do most of the things on their own. This means that issues of standards and quality are not closely monitored. The eventual effect is that teachers who graduate from these colleges and universities may be of low quality and pedigree to teach effectively and competently in secondary schools.

In terms of how teachers ought to be trained in content, methods and the qualities of a teacher, it is easy to decipher that

the goal of the Ministry of Education is to produce an informed teacher who can translate theory into practice effectively and efficiently. The 1977 Education Reforms document is very helpful in unpacking this matter. The goal of teacher training is to impart knowledge and skills into a teacher which is up-to-date with current developments in the field of teaching as well as the country's social economic situation. Teacher education is based on the identified needs and aspirations of the country (Ministry of Education (MoE), 1977). This means that teachers should be informed of the content and current methods of teaching and should be able to use them according to the prevailing conditions of the classroom, the school and the country in general.

In addition, teacher training programmes in Zambia are intended at building a teacher with the right attitude, personality, ethics and knowledge of what teaching and learning is all about. In order to do so, teacher training programmes include subjects such as educational psychology, education sociology, general education, guidance and counselling, and other supporting subjects other than the major teaching subject (Ministry of Education, 1977). As mentioned above, the goal here is to come up with an all-round teacher who is versatile enough to deal with the complexities of the classroom. From what we consider as government's directive for colleges of education to produce an all round teacher, (Ministry of Education, 1977: 67) notes that:

Teacher education should assist the teacher to develop his planning and instructional skills through the use of a variety of techniques and teaching methods. It should also develop his organisational and management abilities, awareness and understanding of learners needs.

From the above quote, the ability to identify learners' needs and be able to use a variety of teaching techniques and methods according to their varying characteristics constitute effective preparation for

the job of teaching.

In addition, it should be noted that it is the intention of the government to train teachers who have multiple skills to handle the complex job of teaching. Teachers should be professional in conduct while also being knowledgeable and competent in the subjects they choose to teach. This is so because teaching demands both professional and academic skills. Further, teachers should be researchers. This means that they should continuously build on the knowledge and skills they acquire in colleges and universities. They should not be satisfied and limited to what they learn in class during teacher training; rather, they should strive to read and be aware of the new developments in the field of teaching. This calls for teachers' creativity and continuous self-development. This is partly so because the teaching profession is in continuous development and change (once a teacher always a student). All these qualities and abilities are expected of a Zambian school teacher, and an expectation which has to be actualised firstly through teacher training. For example, consider the following quote:

The teacher cannot play his various roles successfully from a position of mediocrity. Good teaching demands that the teacher should not only possess a correct attitude and adequate knowledge of the subjects he teaches but also keep abreast of developments in those subjects and in the objectives and methods of teaching (Miminstry of Education 1977:61)

Teaching from a position of mediocrity needs discussion. It must be noted that even a teacher who claims to be qualified can do so from a position of mediocrity. If a teacher fails to motivate and help learners learn equally amounts to mediocrity. Further, teachers who lack a positive attitude, professional ethics in the conduct of teaching and who lack knowledge on the various methods of teaching and in what contexts and topics those methods work may rightly be deemed mediocre. Therefore, it is reasonable to agree

with the government that mediocrity should not have a place in the Zambian teaching service, and that training a competent, ethical and well informed teacher is the right objective of teacher training.

Another important issue the Ministry of Education is interested in is the quality of lecturers in colleges and universities who train teachers. It is believed that quality teachers are products of quality training which emanates from quality teacher educators. This means that lecturers in colleges of education and universities training teachers should be competent both in content and methodology. They need to understand what teaching and learning is about including what can help learners learn through the various methods and what classroom activities enhance learning in particular situations. Lecturers should themselves possess the right attitude and high level of professionalism if they want their students to be professional and successful teachers once they go to teach in schools. It is common belief that teachers are normally a reflection of those who taught them in training institutions. Whether this is true or not, the point is that teacher educators should be competent if they are to produce competent teachers. In line with this argument, MOE (1977:70) believes that:

A good teacher is not a product of chance. He is a product of good education both academically and professionally...this among other things, implies that those who educate and train our teachers must themselves be highly competent and of superior quality.

In relation to Zambia and the focus of this study, it is clear that the Ministry of Education in Zambia expects lecturers in teacher training institutions to be competent and professional. Teachers are expected to be knowledgeable of the content and methods of teaching and how they are applied in teaching. They are expected to have thorough knowledge of the secondary school English syllabus, to be aware of the recommended methods and be able to tailor their training according to the needs and objectives of the

school syllabus. It is, therefore, expected that teacher educators (lecturers) in Zambia have adequate knowledge of the content of the subject, methods and the syllabus. Since they are researchers, they are expected to have wide knowledge of the various teaching contexts in the country and be able to provide advice and mentorship to trainee teachers on how they can go about teaching in those different contexts during teaching practice and when they are deployed in schools after training. Thus, teacher educators should be familiar with research based teacher education and should themselves spend time in schools co-teaching with serving teachers in order to keep abreast with the job of a teacher in the classroom.

Although teacher education in Zambia seems to be founded on very strong grounds, research has shown that generally, teacher training is problematic in Zambia. Manchishi and Mwanza (2013) found in their research on the adequacy of teacher training at the University of Zambia (UNZA) that most student teachers had problems with lesson delivery. They were not able to put theory learnt during training into practice in the classroom.

Another study was conducted by Manchishi and Masaiti (2011) and the aim of the study was to establish if the University of Zambia pre-service teacher education programme was responsive to secondary schools and the aspirations of the communities. They also found weaknesses in the content and methodology of the teacher education programmes. Trainee teachers were unable to apply the broad content learnt and the methods of teaching into real classroom situation. They noted that the problem was with the teacher education programme which needed to be revised if it was to respond to the needs of secondary schools. The mismatch between what was taught at UNZA and what was obtaining in secondary schools meant that teachers had problems fitting in secondary schools because their abilities, skills and attitudes were not of the required or expected standard. Masaiti and Mwanza argued that:

There were gaps between what the UNZA programme was offering and what was obtaining in the High Schools. There is evidence that UNZA trainee teachers were exposed to a broad content material which, in some cases, did not take into consideration what was obtaining in the Zambian High Schools....The study also revealed that UNZA prepared teachers who were weak in the delivery of subject matter (methodology) and that Professional ethics were not part of UNZA Teacher Education Programme, (Masaiti and Manchishi, 2011:311)

The weaknesses associated with the University of Zambia regarding teacher education are a great source of concern. This is because, as the biggest teacher training institution in the country, UNZA has to be a model of teacher training. However, research findings show that there are problems in the manner teacher education is organised, structured and delivered at the institution which negatively impact the quality of teacher graduates which come out of the University as the study above reported.

Mulenga (2015) conducted a study which produced similar findings. The aim of the study was to establish whether or not the English language teacher education curriculum at the University of Zambia had the relevant knowledge and skills for producing a teacher who would teach English in Zambian secondary schools. The study found structural programmes in the manner the teacher education curriculum is delivered to student teachers. The School of Education taught Language Education courses and other education courses such as Education Administration and Policy Studies, Education Psychology and Sociology of Education while the School of Humanities taught all the content courses. Mulenga (2015:iv) reported that:

The results showed that the two schools which taught subject content and methodology courses had different aims about the same curriculum. While the School of Education aimed at producing a teacher of English language, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences intended to produce a graduate who would use the knowledge and skills learnt to venture in any field related to what would have been studied since they thought producing a teacher was not their mandate.

Based on these results, the study further reveals that the School of Humanities and Social Sciences included content in their course outlines which did not correspond with what secondary school teachers needed in order for them to function in secondary school. This mismatch also meant that it was difficult to relate what students learnt in teaching methodology to what they learnt in their content courses since the content was not tailored towards teaching. It is clear, therefore, that teacher education programme is not well structured and its delivery is weak in as far as the goals of teacher training is concerned.

As noted earlier, the University of Zambia sends students on school experience at the end of third year. The idea is to familiarise student teachers to the exigencies of the classroom where they are supposed to put the theory learnt in the University to classroom practice. Manchishi and Mwanza (2013) conducted a study in which they set out to answer the question of whether or not the student teaching experience exercise as done by the university of Zambia was effective. The findings showed that the period of teaching experience was short as it was only run for about 6 weeks. It was also reported that student supervision during the practicum was weak as lecturers rushed the observation process and did not give enough help during the practicum. Clearly, 8 weeks of practicum means that the student will be placed in a school for less than a term and will not have adequate experience

and knowledge of how a terms runs. Further, if one considers the fact that a student teacher will spend the first week observing the experienced teacher, one realises that the actual period of practicing teaching is less than the already inadequate time allocated to the practicum.

Unfortunately, further research shows that even within the School of Education, the methodology courses are not effectively delivered due to limited time frame allocated to the courses. Manchishi and Mwanza (2017) conducted a study on teacher training and specifically, whether peer teaching was still a useful strategy. The findings showed that while peer teaching was still useful, it was not effectively done thereby making it less effective. For example, students reported that they only did one peer teaching and were not given a second chance to work on the earlier weaknesses. Some student teachers stated that they only taught for 10 to 15 minutes as lecturer wanted to have as many students as possible to conduct peer teaching within the same hour in order for every student to teach before the academic year ends. The study showed that the focus on peer teaching seemed to be on assessment and grading than imparting practical acumen in student teachers.

Based on the studies and literature which have been reviewed, the University of Zambia teacher education is weak in terms of how it is organised or structured, coordinated, its content and methodology. While some of these weaknesses require a rethink on the part of the university management and staff, other weaknesses hinge on resources and infrastructure. For example, Longe (2003) noted that UNZA faces a lot of challenges such as poor funding and that this affects its role of ensuring quality and high standard in teacher preparation. The question which the next section will answer is: How do other universities outside Zambia train their teachers and what lessons can UNZA draw from the experiences of others? It is in this spirit that we undertook a library study where we reviewed literature on teacher education

programmes of other universities which culminated into this conceptual paper.

Teacher Training Programmes: Lessons from Other Universities

While the previous section has presented an analysis of the University of Zambia teacher education programme, this section explores five universities and closely looks at how their teacher education programmes are organised and run. The idea here is to draw a comparison with the University of Zambia teacher education with the aim of learning from other universities in areas which require strengthening of the University of Zambia teacher education programme.

In a study which was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Stanford University teacher education programme, Darling-Hammond, Newton and Wei (2010) noted that the teacher education programme delivered coursework to students which ran in parallel with one year placement of a teacher in a cooperating school where the student teacher practiced how to translate theory learnt in the actual teaching in a classroom situation. This programme was evaluated in 1998 (Hetterman, 1999) and a number of challenges were identified. These were:

lack of common vision across the programme; uneven quality of clinical placements and supervision; a fragmented curriculum with inconsistent faculty participation and inadequate attention to practical concerns like classroom management, technology use, and literacy development; limited use of effective pedagogical strategies and modelling in courses; little articulation between courses and clinical work; and little connection between theory and practice (Darling-Hammond, Newton and Wei, 2010: 371).

The challenges above are strikingly similar to the ones experienced

at the University of Zambia today. For example, the difference in the vision between lecturers from the School of Education and School of Humanities as well as the little attention paid to the connection between theory and practice were reported in Mulenga (2015). Poor quality of student practicum as well as poor supervision which took the form of assessment were also reported in a study by Manchishi and Mwanza(2013) while poor articulation between courses and clinical work, specifically peer teaching was reported by Manchishi and Mwanza (2017) as challenges affecting the quality of the University of Zambia. Thus, it is clear that the challenges which the University of Stanford faced as of 1999 are the same kind of challenges being experienced at the University of Zambia today. This is probably the reason why Darling—Hammond et al (2010) refers to these kind of problems as ‘perennial problems’ affecting teacher education programmes. Regardless, the Stanford University programmes also had a number of strengths. According to Darling-Hammond et al, (2010:371), the strengths include ‘the involvement of senior faculty throughout the programme; an emphasis on content pedagogy and on learning to teach reflectively; and a year-long clinical experience running in parallel with coursework in the one-year credential and masters degree programme’. From the list of strengths of the programmes, the most outstanding feature of the Stanford University teacher education programme relative to the University of Zambia teacher education programme is the one year long student placement. Put differently, while student placement at the University of Zambia takes between 4 to 8 weeks, placement at Stanford University takes a whole year. This difference would explain a lot in the disparity in quality of teacher graduates who would come out of the two respective Universities.

Although the Stanford University teacher education programme looks relatively effective, the programme was still re-designed in order to make it more effective in preparing quality teacher graduates who would better integrate theory into practice

and allow them to be successful with diverse learners in schools. Consider the following:

...student teaching placements were overhauled to ensure that candidates would be placed with expert cooperating teachers whose practice is compatible with the programme's vision of good teaching; a 'clinical curriculum' was developed around clearer expectations for what candidates would learn through carefully calibrated graduated responsibility and supervision around a detailed rubric articulating professional standards; and supervisors were trained in supervision strategies and the enactment of the standards-based evaluation system. In addition, technology uses were infused throughout the curriculum to ensure students' proficiency in integrating technology into their teaching. Finally, the programme sought to develop strong relationships with a smaller number of placement schools that are committed to strong equity-oriented practice with diverse learners (Darling-Hammond, 2010: 371-372).

When one considers the above revisions to the Stanford programme, many differences between the programme and the University of Zambia programme arise. For example, at the University of Zambia, there are currently no specific established cooperating schools. Students look for the placement schools based mainly on convenience on the part of the student. While most student teachers get attached to public schools, other get attached to private schools depending on what school they chose. The point is that if student teachers are to learn practice in practice (Ball and Cohen, 1999), the operations of teacher training institutions and placement schools must be tightly integrated and mutually reinforced (Darling-Hammond et al,

2010). The second observation from the quote above is that while Stanford University realised the need to train student supervisors during the practicum, the University of Zambia does not necessarily train supervisors because it is assumed that every lecturer can supervise. However, lack of training among lecturers who go for field work supervision imply that there are several supervisory or monitoring styles except for the standard scoring tool. This explains why in a study by Manchishi and Mwanza (2013), student teachers complained that some lecturers did not spend any meaningful time in the placement schools to interact with the students. Instead, the focuses was on classroom lesson observation and grading the lesson. Thus, what is supposed to be supervision ends up being assessment. In short, the quote above reveals a number of disparities in the way the two Universities conduct their teacher education programmes.

Another university which was reviewed is University of Colorado Denver under the Nxt GEN teacher preparation programme. As part of the strategies and processes for preparing effective and context sensitive teachers, the following are some of the principles for the teacher preparation programme:

We have one of the longest standing partnership models of professional development schools where current teacher candidates experience year-long, intensive, clinically-rich internships; general and special educator preparation are merged...; and faculty engage in continuous renewal and program redesign to meet the needs of an increasing population of cultural, linguistic, and ability diverse students who are impacted by poverty (University of Colorado Denver, 2014:e25-e26).

Like the Stanford University teacher education programme, the programme at the University of Colorado has one year of student teacher attached to a school to practice teaching. As mentioned

earlier, this is very different from the University of Zambia where student practicum ranges between 4 to 8 weeks. Further, while it is not known how regular the University renew and redesign the teacher education programme to suit the ever changing teaching landscape, what is certain is that at the University of Zambia, such constant redesigning of teacher preparation programmes would prove difficult because the school of education depends on schools of Humanities and Social Sciences as well as school of Natural sciences for some courses which students take (See Manchishi and Masaiti, 2011 and Manchishi and Mwanza, 2013). The part dependency of the school of education on other schools within the university means that the school is not autonomous to make such decisions. This scenario also means that there is need for close relationships and talks between the three schools involved for the teacher preparation programme at the University and that the programme for teacher education be redesigned in order to respond to the needs of the teacher and the specific context where they will be placed.

The third University which was reviewed is St Cloud State University. Bacharach, Heck and Dahlberg (2010) reported on one aspect of teacher training at St Cloud State University. They noted that during teaching practice, a student teacher spends the first week observing a serving experienced teacher. At this point, the student teacher is a 'passive' observer while the serving teacher teaches alone. After a week, the experienced teacher stops and the student teacher takes over and starts to teach alone without the help or observation of the experienced teacher. It is important to note that this practice is strikingly similar to the one at the University of Zambia. The idea behind the practice where the student teacher observes for a week before taking over the class is to help the student teacher learn from the experienced teacher through observation about class management, how to present the lesson and to also understand the general

student behaviour and classroom culture of the class he/she is about to inherit. It also helps to remove anxiety in both student teacher and the pupils. During observation, the student teacher and pupils will get used to each other so that when he/she starts teaching, the two are not strangers to each other.

Although the practice at both St Cloud State University and the University of Zambia seems to be rooted on firm ground, it has been questioned by some scholars. Thus, at St Cloud State University, other alternatives have been introduced as experiments to see which practices would be more helpful for the both the teacher and the pupils. Consider the following quote on St Cloud State University:

Historically, teacher candidates spend their initial weeks as silent observers, gradually assuming the role of teaching, leading up to full responsibility for the classroom. Teacher candidates were left alone or, at a minimum, unassisted in a classroom as they assumed this full responsibility. Given the increasing diversity of today's schools and the prevalence of teacher accountability issues, this model of learning to teach in isolation should no longer be unquestioned practice (Bacharach et al, 2010:3).

In questioning this practice, Bacharach et al, (2010) argue that the practice of allowing the teacher observe for a few weeks and or being observed for sometime and then being left alone in the classroom translates into a sink or swim approach to teacher training. Their argument is that leaving the student teacher alone means that they will have to confront the challenges or pleasure of teachers alone and eventually succeed or fail alone in the classroom without anyone by

their side. Thus, following Darling Hammond and Dransford (2005) who argued that in linking course work to practicum work, student teachers should be supported throughout their student teaching experience, Bacharach et al (2010) suggest co-teaching as an alternative and better way of introducing teacher candidates to the practice of classroom teaching. They argue that it is too sudden and unfriendly to leave a novice teacher alone in the classroom to teach alone. In this case, it is thought that co-teaching is the preferred way of student teaching practice. By definition, Co-teaching is “an arrangement in which two or more teachers...plan, instruct and evaluate in one or more subject areas” (Miller and Trump 1973:354). Cook and Friend (1995:14) defined co-teaching as “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space”. In addition, co-teaching is also understood as two or more teachers working together “for the outcome of achieving what none could have done alone” (Wenzlaff et al, 2002:4).

There are a lot arguments for co-teaching during student teaching practice over teaching alone after observing and being observed for a few weeks. For example, co teaching ensures that the student teacher receives support throughout the teaching practice. Regarding teaching, it is argued that co teaching ensures that the experienced teacher and the student teacher work together when planning the lesson, designing the teaching materials and when delivering the lesson. In so doing, it is believed that the lesson is richer than the one where one is involved. The other argument about co-teaching is about maximising on the time in the class. It is also argued that since two teachers will be involved, they will assist each other in performing various tasks, attending to pupils’ different needs. In short, the overarching argument for co-teaching is that it produces results in the learners

which none of the teachers would do alone (Bacharach, 2010). Although co teaching appears to have a number of advantages, it is not known how effective this strategy would be in the Zambian context considering the unique education system and ideology in Zambia.

In Kenya, Kenyatta University (undated) conducted a study in which they reported the manner in which teaching practice for pre-service teachers was conducted and they passed recommendations on how it should be improved. It was reported that pre-service teaching practice was mired with several challenges such as the lack of knowledge on the use of ICT, large number of students being placed in school for the practicum, poor quality of supervision by University lecturers and lack of support by school mentors. Pre-service student teachers reported that they were not adequately prepared to use ICT in their teaching during the practicum. Financing of teaching practice was also another challenge and it compromised the manner in which students were placed and supervised. For example, students were supervised by a lecturer who was not necessarily a subject experts. The reason behind this practice was that there were many students and the institution could not manage to send subject expert to visit every student in the field because there were few staff and funding was also limited. In view of the above challenges, the study recommended that there was need for the Kenyata University to improve their teacher preparation curriculum by including the use of ICT in their teacher education curriculum. Secondly, the study also recommended that general didactic principles learnt from education courses at the University should be made more practical so that student teachers clearly see the link between those courses and the practice of teaching. Further, since cooperating teachers were not supportive to train teachers, it was recommended that the university should prepare student

teachers on skills of how to handle learners of diverse needs and abilities. Finally, it was recommended that supervision from the University needed to improve where a student teacher should be supervised for a minimum of two times during the practicum. Similarly, there was need to send expert teachers if supervision needed to be meaningful.

In South Africa, a study was conducted by Heeralal and Bayaga (2011) which focused on pre-service Teachers' experiences of teaching practice of a particular South African University. At this University, the degree programme takes four years. In the course of the programme, students take content courses and a teaching methodology course is offered as a year course from first to fourth year of study. There are also seminars on a weekly basis while teaching practice is sometimes organised in one block which takes six weeks. When students go for teaching practice, they first observe a mentor for a number of lessons before the trainee teachers assumes teaching on his/her own. Whenever possible, trainee teachers are given the opportunity to observe a variety of lessons which include different ages of learners and different levels of knowledge.

However, Heeralal and Bayaga (2011) noted that trainee teachers at this University face a number of challenges which range from logistics to subject knowledge. For example, students complained that the University did not give them the opportunity to choose where they would do their practicum. Thus, some student teachers were unhappy with the area and school where they were posted for teaching practice. Further, student teachers complained about the lack of adequate preparation by the University for Teaching Practice. Students explained that the University was idealistic and did not have practical knowledge about a secondary school. For example, a student said that the university expected more from the student without knowing how a normal day works out in a real

school. Thus, students struggled between fitting in the school and meeting the idealistic expectations of their University. The other challenge was lack of support from mentors within the school where the student teacher was attached. Mentors did all the work or simply left the student teacher to do it alone. This meant that there was no proper collaboration between mentors and student teachers. Due to the limited time of teaching practice and the amount of work students were required to do within the six weeks, student teachers observed that there was very little teaching which took place during the practicum exercise. For example, students were expected to develop a journal and do some administrative work which required a lot of time which eventually made student teachers not to teach many lessons. There was also poor feedback from supervisors while communication with teaching practice coordinators was also poor.

Lessons Learnt and Way Forward

The previous section has reviewed the teacher training practices of five Universities outside Zambia. A number of similarities and differences have been identified as well as practices which the University of Zambia may need to adopt in order to strengthen its own teacher education programme and practices.

Firstly, the importance of qualified and experienced mentors in schools cannot be overemphasised. Each student teacher should be assigned a mentor who should closely work with the student in scaffolding the trainee into the practice of teaching. Since the linking of trainees to mentors is not compulsory at UNZA, it should be compulsory. This practice ensures that universities and secondary schools become co-workers in the preparation of teachers.

Secondly, there is need to have a list of cooperating

schools and the University should have a formal and mutual understanding on their roles and the roles of the serving teachers. Student teachers should therefore be given the list of those schools when applying for teaching practice so that placement is not at the discretion of the student. In other words, while students can choose which school to be attached, their choice should be guided by a list of cooperating and approved schools for teaching practice. In fact, having mentors in secondary schools become easy if there is already a professional understanding between the University and the secondary school in question.

Thirdly, there is need to make teaching practice last for a full term (three months). As it has been observed, Stanford University and Colorado State University have a one year long teaching practice while UNZA currently has 4 to 8 weeks of teaching practice. As other studies (Masaiti and Manchishi, 2011; Manchishi and Mwanza, 2013, Mwanza, 2016) have established, the short period of teaching practice at the University of Zambia has rendered the whole exercise less effective and not achieving the intended goals. Thus, the fact that other universities can have a one year programme, it is certainly possible for UNZA have even just a whole term of teaching practice. This way, the student teacher will be exposed to what happens in a school throughout the term cycle.

Fourth, it has been learnt from Stanford University that lecturers are trained in supervision. This is very crucial in changing and improving teacher education at the University of Zambia. Currently, it is assumed that every lecturer knows what supervision is all about and there is no training offered to any member of staff who is sent in the field for student observation. Potentially, this means that there are several supervisory styles by different lecturers. Apart from the marking sheet which is given to every lecturer when going

in the field, there is no harmony in the scope of supervision. Thus, while some may consider it to be classroom observation and awarding a grade, others may go further by even having a discussion with a student before and after the lesson including offering professional guidance. From the foregoing and results from Manchishi and Mwanza (2013) which reported that some UNZA lecturers rushed the supervision, there is certainly need for the STP office to organise workshops where all lecturers participating in practicum supervision should be trained in teaching experience supervision.

Fifth, different universities and cultures may need different ways of training teachers depending on the local education policies and teaching practices and ideologies. The study of St Cloud University has shown the benefits of co-teaching. While co-teaching appears to be a progressive practice at St Cloud University, other universities including the University of Zambia should be careful in adopting such practices holistically because what may work in another cultural setting may fail in another settings. In any case, the ultimate goal of teacher training is to let the teacher know how to teach independently without the help of another teacher. Thus, if the idea of teaching practice is to expose the novice teacher to the actualities of classroom teaching, it follows that there should be a time when the student teacher is left alone to try teaching independently. The other argument is that if a student exclusively engages with co-teaching throughout teaching practice, it would be difficulty for the teacher and the university to measure or asses how much development has taken place in the teacher. Further, if real classroom teaching does not involve co-teaching, it is appropriate that trainee teacher also engages with pupils alone in order to make teaching practice as realistic as possible. In a nutshell, the argument here is that while co-teaching has proved useful according to a study conducted at St Cloud University, it

may not be appropriate in Zambia since teacher preparation should be tailored to what the teacher will be doing after graduation. To this end, observing lessons for the first one or two weeks and later take up the class (as it is currently done at UNZA) is substantial. The component that can and should not be taken away from the concept of co teaching is co-preparation of the lesson between the student teacher and the mentor. It is cardinal that a student teacher receives constant help or check during lesson preparation before he/she can go to deliver the lesson to the class. This is the reason why the job of a mentor does not end until a student teacher has completed the teaching experience exercise.

The sixth lesson learnt is that teacher education faces challenges in most if not all Universities. The most common challenge is lack of linkage between the content learnt in the university and what the teachers are expected to do in the secondary school once they go for teaching practice. It appears that university education is generally too bulk and complex for what teachers do in high schools. It is therefore necessary that while universities may offer content that is more advanced relative to the secondary school subject syllabus, there should be specific additional courses within the degree programme whose aim is to align teacher training content to the needs of a school teacher. However, this requires research and constant collaboration with secondary schools to know what they need and how it should be done.

The seventh observation is that teacher education is an expensive venture and requires adequate funding. From the findings, the University of Zambia, Kenyatta University and the South African University students have short periods of teaching practice. The reasons are mainly twofold. The interdependence between schools offering courses and most importantly, lack of funding. Thus, inadequate funding in these three universities and probably many African

universities offers an alternative explanation why it is difficult to produce an all-round prepared teacher in these contexts. Most of the challenges being faced especially by African universities including UNZA require adequate funding. For example, mentors in secondary schools should be trained in mentorship but more so, they need to be paid for the work which they are asked to do. It must be noted that mentoring a trainee for a term or a year is a lot of work which should be rewarded. It is actually possible that the negative attitude by mentors or serving teachers is because they feel used or abused by Universities who ask them to do work which they are not paid for. Supervisors need enough time in the field in order to have adequate time to interact thoroughly with students and provide meaningful and detailed feedback. This requires money because the supervisor will have to pay for accommodation and food for enough days relative to the number of students. Constant communication between STP office and schools as well as pupils requires money. Sending subject experts to visit respective students and avoiding the issue of ‘satellites’ (sending one supervisor to an area and observe all subjects whether or not he/she is a subject expert) requires money too. The complaints by students are genuine. Sending anyone to observe any subject is taking teacher education for granted. However, doing the right thing requires adequate funding. Thus, the lesson learnt here is that some of the challenges facing the University of Zambia teacher education programme requires funding to be solved.

Conclusion

From the University of Zambia to Stanford University, St Cloud University, Colorado State University, Kenyatta University and finally, South Africa, it is clear that teacher

education programmes and practices require constant improvement since the teaching and learning contexts keep changing. Through interaction, collaboration and reading the literature about each other, universities can learn from one another the most beneficial pre-service teacher training practices for the good of education and the future of pupils. These changes however, require human, material and financial support. By appreciating the lessons learnt in this paper through implementing the suggestions made, it is hoped that the University of Zambia pre-service teacher training will improve quality teacher graduates will be the outcome.

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