AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT A UNIVERSITY IN LUSAKA PROVINCE, ZAMBIA: A FOCUS ON EDUCATION COURSES

By

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia, School of Education in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum Studies

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I, **Sydney Peunja**, hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own original work and has not been previously submitted for award of any degree at the University of Zambia or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation by **Sydney Peunja** has been approved as fulfilling the partial requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum Studies at the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

This study was an examination of the teacher education programme at a university in Lusaka, Zambia, with the primary focus on the education courses offered. Guided by the human capital theory, the research objectives were to examine lecturers' and students' views on the teacher education courses offered, identify gaps in the education courses against occupational demands, and identify key courses to be added to the teacher education programme. The researcher in this study employed a qualitative case study design, utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to collect data from 42 participants who comprised of 15 lecturers, 24 students, the Registrar Teaching Council of Zambia, Deputy Director-Teacher Education and Specialized Services and the School of Education Assistant Dean. Findings revealed gaps in the teacher education programme, including limited exposure to school experience. Another gap was that education courses prescribed as core courses by Ministry of Education Curriculum Framework such as Education Administration and Management, ICT, Curriculum Studies, Special and Inclusive Education, and Guidance and Counselling were being offered as elective courses. Therefore, conclusions were drawn that the aforementioned gaps may hinder the preparation of well-rounded, competent teachers who are capable of addressing the diverse needs of modern classrooms. Recommendations include a call for the institution understudy to increase the duration of teaching practice, as well as a call for student teachers to be exposed to the prescribed education courses so as to attain holistic teacher preparation. Also, there is need to conduct similar studies in other teacher preparation institutions not covered in this study.

Keywords: *teacher education, education courses, inclusive education, teaching practice, prescribed courses, elective courses, core courses*

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Peunja, for their unwavering support, guidance and belief in me throughout this journey. To my wonderful brothers, Daniel, James, and Mundia, thank you for being there whenever I needed someone to talk to and for always lifting my spirits. Your encouragement and understanding have been my constant source of strength.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In this chapter, the background of the study, the statement of the problem, aim of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework, as well as operational definitions of terms have been presented.

1.2 Background

The quality of any education system is determined by the quality of teachers it produces (Educating Our Future, 1996). Correspondingly, questions such as "What should teacher educators be competent in?" "What tasks and competencies are teacher educators expected to possess?" and ultimately "What does it mean to be a good teacher educator?" have rarely been investigated (Koster, Brekelmans, Korthagen, & Wubbels, 2005). Ideally, teacher preparation looks at four components. These components are content knowledge, the methodology or pedagogical content knowledge, education theories and co-curricular activities. Firstly, student teachers need to understand the content of the subject they will teach. Secondly, these student teachers also need to learn how to teach this content in the subject they are being prepared in. Thirdly, the degree student teachers obtain from the University understudy reads as Bachelor of Arts with education which implies that the student from the said University ought to receive education that involves learning the art of the subject as well as philosophy of education. Lastly, a student teacher needs to learn the art of providing guidance in co-curricular activities.

Also, the effectiveness of teachers is largely determined by the clarity and alignment provided by a comprehensive job description. According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018), in the realm of education, teachers are the architects of knowledge, shaping young minds and fostering intellectual growth. However, the efficacy of a teacher is not solely determined by their passion or qualifications; rather, it hinges on the clarity and alignment provided by a comprehensive job description (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). A job description serves as the foundational compass for teacher education, delineating roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Its significance in teacher education cannot be overstated, as it not only guides aspiring teachers but also fosters a culture of professionalism, efficacy, and continuous improvement within the education system.

Additionally, a well-crafted job description acts as a guiding light, illuminating the specific roles and responsibilities expected of teachers (Demerouti & Bakker, 2001). It outlines the fundamental duties, from curriculum development and lesson planning to classroom

management, school management and student assessment (Demerouti & Bakker, 2001). For teacher education, this clarity is invaluable, offering aspiring teachers a clear roadmap of what the profession entails. It serves as a reference point, aligning their skills, competencies, and aspirations with the multifaceted demands of the teaching profession.

According to Floden and Clark (1988), teaching is a noble profession that encompasses a variety of responsibilities crucial for shaping the future generations. Thus, a teacher's job description extends far beyond helping learners acquire knowledge; it encompasses a diverse array of roles and responsibilities (Floden & Clark, 1988). At its core, a teacher is a mentor, facilitator, and guide who fosters intellectual, social, and emotional development in learners (Lortie, 1975). On the other hand, education courses form the cornerstone of a teacher's professional growth and development. These courses provide aspiring teachers with a comprehensive understanding of pedagogical theories, teaching methodologies, and practical strategies essential for effective classroom and school management (Floden & Clark, 1988).

Firstly, a teacher is expected to be a facilitator of learning (Floden & Clark, 1988). This involves designing and delivering educational content in a manner that caters to diverse learning styles (Floden & Clark, 1988). Teachers create engaging lessons, employ various teaching methodologies, and utilize educational technology to ensure effective comprehension among students (Lortie, 1975). Education courses offer a theoretical foundation that enriches these teaching practices. They delve into educational psychology, curriculum development, and instructional design, equipping teachers with the knowledge to tailor lessons to diverse learning needs.

Secondly, Floden and Clark (1988) asserted that a teacher is expected to assume the role of a mentor and role model. They not only convey subject matter expertise but also instill values, ethics and critical thinking skills (Jackson, 1986). Through their actions and guidance, teachers mold learners into responsible and empathetic individuals capable of navigating the complexities of the world (Jackson, 1986). For example, Ethics as an education course covers ethical principles, moral reasoning, and dilemmas in educational settings. Therefore, it can help teachers understand how to navigate ethical challenges and make decisions aligned with moral values.

Moreover, a teacher is expected to be an assessor and evaluator (Lortie, 1975). According to Jackson (1986), teachers design assessments and provide constructive feedback to aid learners' academic progress. They identify strengths and weaknesses, adapting their teaching strategies

to address individual learning needs (Jackson, 1986). Thus, assessment and measurement as an education course is crucial for student teachers as it equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to assess, evaluate, and support learning effectively. It enables them to be reflective practitioners who continuously improve their teaching methods based on assessment data, ultimately enhancing the quality of education they provide.

Furthermore, a teacher is expected to be a collaborator and communicator (Floden & Clark, 1988). They work in partnership with parents, administrators, and fellow educators to create a supportive learning environment (Lortie, 1975). Effective communication is key in fostering a conducive atmosphere for the growth and success of learners (Floden & Clark, 1988). Ultimately, educational administration and management as an education course empowers student teachers with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives necessary to contribute meaningfully to the administrative aspects of educational institutions. It broadens their understanding of the educational ecosystem beyond the classroom, preparing them to be effective educators and potential future leaders in the field of education. Additionally, course such as Philosophy of Education, Comparative Education, Guidance and Counselling, Media Education and others help to strengthen teachers' teaching and mentorship roles in the schools.

On the other hand, Biesta and Stengel (2016) argued for the importance of considering the questions of purpose, intention and relation at the center of any effort to understand and change teaching practices, including teacher education practices. They propose that such philosophical thinking about teaching has extremely practical implications. According to Mulenga (2015:15);

> By examining the use of language and the meaning of educational concepts, and through raising fundamental questions, seeking justification and challenging the basis of assumptions and value judgment, a student teacher can begin to build up an important dimension of their professional life. Thus, educational theory should be taught in such a way that it will be informing the teacher's professional judgements and actions, and provide sufficient range of concepts and skills with which to evaluate the ideas and research findings of educational innovations.

Thus, teacher preparation programs in Zambia are intended at building a teacher with the right attitude, personality, ethics and knowledge of what teaching and learning is all about. According to Hong (2010), pre-service teachers tend to have naive and unrealistic perceptions of teaching when not exposed to key education courses. The standard of teacher education impacts mostly the performance of educational activities conducted by teachers in institutions,

and teachers generally reflect on how they were trained (Cruicshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2009). Furthermore, Manchishi and Masaiti (2011) carried out a study which was to establish if the University of Zambia pre-service teacher education was responsive to secondary schools and the aspirations of the communities. The findings of this study were that there were weaknesses in content of the teacher education programs. In addition, another study was done by Manchishi and Mwanza (2013) on the effectiveness of school teaching experience at the University of Zambia and it was discovered that the content and methodology was not adequate to prepare student teachers for teaching experience. These student teachers were not able to put theory learnt during their teacher education because it was not classroom tailored.

Theories of education are offered through educational programmes to student teachers in Zambia to influence their professional actions and decisions as well as equip them with an appropriate spectrum of concepts and abilities for professional development later on (Banja & Mulenga, 2019). In order to achieve this, the University of Namibia Prospectus (2023) asserted that a student teacher should take 22 education theory courses during their four-year degree study and they ought to recognize the significance of key education courses such as educational assessment in providing better learning experiences for learners. According to the University of Namibia Prospectus (2023:178);

> Holders of this qualification are able to: 1. apply subject and pedagogical knowledge, including how to select, sequence, design teaching and learning materials that fit diverse learner backgrounds and pace the content in a secondary classroom in line with both the subject and learner needs; 2. apply the national ICT standards for secondary school teachers, contemporary digital and media tools in the design, implementation and assessment of learning experiences, 3. Demonstrate skills on how to teach diverse learners at secondary school phase, including skills for working in partnership with parents, guardians and communities to identify learners with learning or social problems. 4. create learning opportunities that are culturally responsive to help all learners learn regardless of their language, ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds, geographic locations, special needs; 5. apply and uphold the professional code of conduct for teachers at secondary phase, 6. Design a research proposal and synthesize the findings into a research report 7. Analyze and evaluate learning experiences in the subject specializations; 8. demonstrate effective and appropriate communication techniques in teaching; 9. analyze and apply a variety of assessment strategies in teaching and 10. demonstrate flexibility and ability to adapt to changing work contexts as well as Applying advanced content and skills in an area of specialization.

According to Renshaw (2010), the purpose of educational theory is to expose students to fields of knowledge that play a role in the creation of guiding foundations and principles for the resolution of real-world educational issues. The curriculum that student teachers take at a

University in Lusaka, Zambia can have pre-service teachers graduate without having learnt key education courses such as philosophy of education, educational administration, assessment and measurement and curriculum studies. For instance, Philosophy of education is very important because it helps the teacher to understand what education is (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Pre-service teachers at the aforementioned University can also graduate without having studied the theories and principles of a curriculum and yet curriculum studies as a course is important to teachers because on the very first day that they reach their school of deployment, they will start implementing the curriculum. In spite of this prevailing situation, student teachers at a University in Zambia learn more of subject content courses than that of education courses. For example, a student teacher studying bachelor of agricultural of science with education at a University in Zambia will take more subject content courses from the school of natural sciences and take less of education courses. Since preparing a teacher requires that one understands education, pre-service teachers need to be well grounded in education.

Additionally, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) contended that the study of educational fields like philosophy of education, sociology of education, educational psychology, and more ought to be a significant part of a student teacher's education, but it is also important to consider their professional importance. This means that the content should be chosen not only to highlight the key ideas in philosophy, psychology, and other related fields, but also for its professional value. Important courses such as economics of education, comparative education, curriculum studies, philosophy of education, educational administration and assessment and measurement are all treated as electives at a University in Lusaka, Zambia. Assessment and measurement as a course is quite significant because assessment is actually part and parcel of teaching but it is still not regarded as a core course in the school of education at a University in Lusaka, Zambia. It is for this reason that one may wonder in terms of what kind of teachers are being produced when it comes to their understanding of education.

In addition, assessment and measurement is an important course for every student teacher to take in their quest to eventually become effective teachers. According to the Ministry of Education (2017:9) in the National Assessment for Learning, "teachers should recognize the central role of assessment in learning and should plan and implement assessment strategies as a routine part of the teaching and learning process. Most of the assessment activities teachers engage in are formative, helping them to shape teaching and learning approaches and adapt to learners' specific needs. Although assessments are planned by teachers, the information they provide should be used routinely by both teachers and learners to improve learning." Similarly,

the Ministry of Education (2013) in the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework stated that in order to ascertain whether or not teaching and learning have occurred, assessment is a crucial element in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, it is only right that educational assessment as a course should not be treated as an elective but as a core course for every student teacher at a University in Lusaka, Zambia.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education (2013) in the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework emphasized on providing an education system that incorporates co-curricular activities. "Co-curricular activities are organized activities, which are part of the formalized teaching schedule. Ministry of Education (2013:67) in the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework also clearly stated that "all students will be expected to be involved in the following activities which are part of the education curriculum; Clubs and Associations, Sports, Preventive Maintenance, and Production Unit." However, a pre-service teacher at a University in Lusaka, Zambia may graduate without learning about any of these activities. For example, one of the most sought after 21st century skill is team work which can be taught through a soccer game. So, a teacher ought to be prepared in serving as a sports patron to prepare for learning activities such as football, netball and athletics which are part and parcel of the curriculum.

Additionally, Educational administration is another example of a course that is treated as an elective for student teachers at a University in Zambia and yet it is very cardinal for the would-be teachers. Head teachers, Standards officers and District Education Board Secretaries are all dealing with administrative tasks in education and yet all of them stem from teaching positions before they are promoted to manage these educational administrative positions. Ministry of Education (1996:158) in the Educating our Future document postulated that;

> Effectiveness in the delivery of education depends heavily on the quality of educational administration. School heads, education officers and inspectors need training in educational management and supervision. However, the majority of those occupying supervisory and management positions in the sector have not received training for their posts. The few managers who have been trained received their training either abroad or from local institutions that offer general programmes not specifically directed towards educational management. This state of affairs has led to inefficiencies and poor performance in the management and supervision of the system.

Based on this observation, it is evident that all student teachers need to be prepared for these administrative positions by ensuring that educational administration is taken as a core course.

This would ensure that the Ministry of Education does not have incompetent educational administration personnel when promoting teachers.

Furthermore, knowledge about the curriculum is significant for every pre-service teacher because teaching is basically implementation of the curriculum. Curriculum knowledge, according to Faisal (2014), focuses on teachers' comprehension of the content and goals of the curriculum as well as what learners at various levels are expected to acquire at different points in their education. Similarly, Beyer and Davis (2012) contended that "If teachers are unable to analyze curriculum materials, they would either make unnecessary changes or fail to make needed modifications. Consequently, they should learn how to adapt curriculum materials." However, human beings attach value where there is meaning and yet some student teachers at a University in Lusaka, Zambia graduate without knowing the definition and components of the curriculum they are supposed to implement. Despite this being the prevailing situation, a University in Lusaka, Zambia is offering curriculum studies as a course but as an elective. Moreover, curriculum specialists in the Directorate of Curriculum Development are picked among teachers who in this case may have come from a University in Zambia where they may have not done a course in curriculum studies.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Pre-service teacher education is intended for candidates who have no initial formal teacher preparation or experience (Ministry of Education, 2023). Thus, the Ministry of Education (2023:31) in the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework has recommended eight core education courses that every pre-service teacher must have taken by the time they complete the programme. However, within the context of teacher education at one University in Lusaka province in Zambia, a pressing concern emerged pertaining to core education courses being offered as elective courses. According to Mulenga (2016), pre-service teachers at a University in Lusaka study more subject content courses than education courses and this makes one think about whether teachers are getting enough preparation in becoming well-grounded educationists. Consequently, students who want to become teachers learn a lot about their different subjects, but they might not effectively learn how to conduct themselves as professionals, how to assess learning, how to effectively execute administrative tasks in education, how to spearhead co-curricular activities as well as different facets of education throughout their career as education courses pave way for lifelong learning Mulenga (2016). Therefore, it is for this reason that the researcher in this study analyzed the adequacy of the teacher education, education courses at a University in Lusaka, Zambia since a good number

of education courses were treated as electives while others did not appear in the programme all together.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the teacher education programme at a university in Lusaka province, Zambia with a primary focus on education courses that were offered.

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of this study were to;

1. examine lecturers' and students' views about teacher education courses at a University in Zambia.

2. assess the gaps in the education courses that are offered at a University in Zambia against the occupational demands of the teaching profession.

3. identify key education courses that should be added to the teacher education programme at a university in Zambia to give it a latitude to develop competent teachers.

1.6 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. What were the views of lecturers and students about the teacher education courses at a University in Zambia?

2. What were the gaps in the education courses offered at a University in Zambia against the occupational demands of the teaching profession?

3. What were the key education courses that should be added to the teacher education programme at a University in Zambia to give it a latitude to develop competent teachers?

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Human capital theory posits that investment in education leads to an increase in an individual's productivity (Becker & Woessmann, 2011). According to Becker and Woessmann (2011), Human capital theory suggests that the demand for specific occupations, like teaching, is influenced by the perceived value of the skills and knowledge possessed by individuals in that profession (Becker & Woessmann, 2011). As society increasingly recognizes the importance of quality education, the demand for well-prepared teachers rises. Therefore, the education

courses that students should be exposed to should respond to the occupational demand of the teaching profession they are being prepared for.

When applied to students studying education courses, this theory suggests that by investing their time and effort in acquiring knowledge and skills in education, they are enhancing their human capital. Students studying education courses typically aim to become educators or work in related fields. By pursuing these courses, they are investing in their human capital by acquiring specific knowledge, teaching methodologies, classroom and school management skills, and understanding educational theories. These skills and knowledge are directly related to their future job descriptions as teachers or education professionals.

For instance, a student studying to become a teacher invests in their human capital by gaining expertise in pedagogy, learning about different teaching methods, understanding child psychology, and developing effective management skills. This investment is intended to prepare them to fulfill the job description of a teacher effectively.

Moreover, the human capital theory suggests that the more education and preparation individuals acquire, the greater their potential contributions to the workforce (Becker & Woessmann, 2011). Therefore, students studying education courses are essentially aligning themselves with the job description that require a specific set of skills and knowledge related to the field of education, aiming to increase their value and potential in the teaching profession. Thus, it is not about the number but the adequacy of education courses that a student teacher is studying that prepares them to be well-grounded educationists and thereby increasing their productivity.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework in research is a visual or written representation of the key concepts, variables, relationships, or ideas within a study. It is essentially the theoretical foundation upon which the research is built. In relation to this study, the researcher used the conceptual framework in figure 1.1 to show the reciprocal relationships among three variables namely, job description, teacher education and teaching profession. The arrows between job description and teacher education are an indication that job description informs teacher education by indicating the skills, competencies, roles and expectations required when students interact with education courses. Simultaneously, teacher education programs feed into the fulfillment of job

description by preparing teachers to meet these requirements through the education courses provided to students. Further, the arrows between teacher education and teaching profession illustrate that teacher education courses aim to prepare individuals for the complexities of the teaching profession, while the experiences and needs within the teaching profession provide feedback that helps refine and adapt teacher education programs. Lastly, the relationship between job description and teaching profession is that job description provides a framework for the teaching profession, guiding teachers' skills, competencies, roles and expectations. Simultaneously, the experiences, expertise, and advancements within the teaching profession inform the evolution and refinement of job description to ensure it remains relevant and reflective of the demands and realities of the educational landscape.

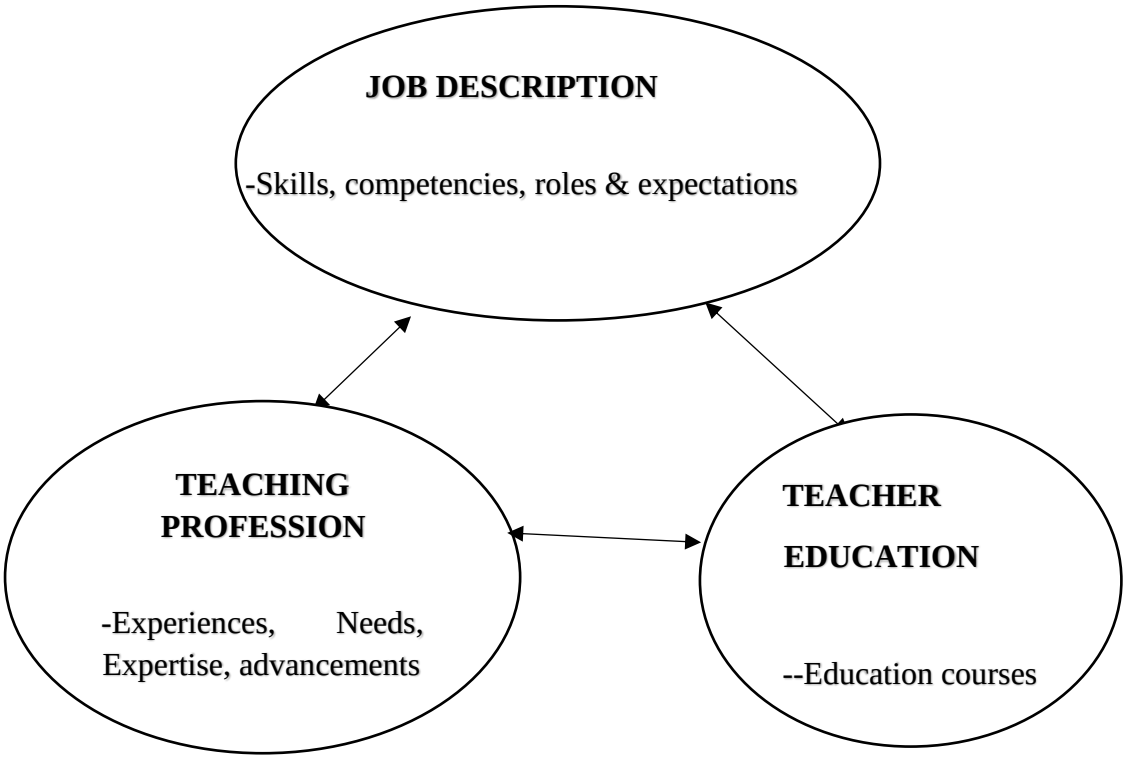

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

1.9 Significance of the Study

This study may benefit teacher educators because they are the developers of the curriculum in the colleges and universities where they teach. The findings may inform their curriculum review process in terms of how they can prepare teachers to be well grounded in education. Additionally, the Ministry of Education may also benefit through the Directorate of Teacher Education and Specialized Services because they make decisions about teacher education in

Zambia. Institutions offering teacher education programmes may later use the findings of this study to help adopt a more balanced approach to teacher education, resulting in better-prepared teachers.

Understanding the adequacy of education courses is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it directly impacts on the quality of teacher preparation and ultimately influences the effectiveness of teaching practices in Zambia. Teachers who are well-prepared and equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills are better positioned to meet the diverse needs of learners and contribute positively to educational outcomes.

Secondly, assessing the adequacy of education courses can inform curriculum development and improvement efforts within the teacher education program. By identifying strengths and weaknesses in the existing curriculum, teacher educators can make informed decisions about revisions and enhancements to better align with current educational standards and practices.

Furthermore, addressing this research gap can contribute to the broader discourse on teacher education and educational policy in Zambia. Insights gained from the study can inform policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the quality of teacher preparation programs nationwide, ultimately contributing to the improvement of the education system as a whole.

In summary, conducting a study on the importance of identifying the adequacy of education courses in the teacher education program at a University in Zambia was essential due to the research gap identified in the literature. This investigation held significance for improving teacher preparation, informing curriculum development, and contributing to educational policy in Zambia.

1.10 Delimitations

This study focussed on one university in Lusaka province in Zambia by examining the adequacy of education courses in the teacher education programme. It did not encompass other universities or teacher education institutions in different regions or countries.

1.11 Limitations

Study used a small sample and no generalization of findings to the entire population. However, by selecting participants with diverse backgrounds, the researcher ensured that diversity of views was included, ultimately enhancing the applicability and relevance of the findings.

1.12 Operational Definition of Terms

Adequacy: in this study referred to the state or condition of meeting or fulfilling a particular standard, requirement, or expectation.

Education Courses: in this study education courses referred to structured units of teaching designed to provide knowledge, skills, and understanding in various aspects of education.

Subject-Based Courses: referred to academic courses that cover the specific content, theories, principles, or disciplines that teachers will later teacher in classrooms. These courses are designed to deepen teachers' knowledge in their chosen subjects.

Teaching Effectiveness: in this study this term referred to the ability of teachers to engage students, convey subject content in a comprehensible manner, create a conducive learning environment, utilize appropriate teaching methods, address diverse learning needs, and ultimately facilitate positive learning outcomes.

Pedagogical Strategies: this encompassed a range of instructional approaches, techniques, and methods used by teachers to facilitate learning. These strategies might include active learning, cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, technology integration, and more.

Subject Content Knowledge: referred to a teachers' deep understanding of the specific concepts, theories, facts, and principles within the academic subjects they are qualified to teach. It encompasses a comprehensive grasp of the content that enables effective teaching.

Student Learning Outcomes: it denoted measurable results of the educational process, including the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students acquire as a result of their participation in a balanced teacher education curriculum.

Curriculum Development: it referred to the process of designing, planning, and organizing the educational program, including selecting and sequencing courses, determining learning objectives, and structuring the learning experiences for teacher education students.

Professional Development: in the context of this study, it referred to the continuous learning and growth that teachers engage in throughout their career to improve their teaching skills, enhance subject knowledge, and stay updated with evolving educational practices.

1.13. Summary

This chapter introduced the study as a whole. A concise overview of the research background has been provided, followed by specific issues that need addressing in the statement of the problem. Additionally, the study's purpose, objectives, and research questions have been explained. Furthermore, the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, significance of the study, delimitations, and operational definition of terms have been provided too. The next chapter consists of literature that is related to this study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Overview

In this chapter, a review of literature related to the topic under study has been presented. The chapter has sub headings which are; the concept of teacher education, models of teacher education, the evolving landscape of teacher education, curriculum design and teacher education, the views of lecturers and students about teacher education courses, pedagogical approaches in teacher education, global trends in teacher education. The conclusion of the chapter will have a summary of the existing gap which the current study will try to fill.

2.2 The Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher education is a foundational element in the development of effective teachers who are instrumental in shaping the future of education. Understanding the concept of teacher education is foundational to its effective implementation. According to Darling-Hammond (2017), teacher education encompasses a comprehensive process that includes academic preparation, pedagogical training and practical experiences. This foundational understanding provides a framework for evaluating the components of education courses.

Teacher education refers to the structured programs and policies designed to prepare individuals for the teaching profession. It encompasses both pre-service training for aspiring teachers and in-service professional development for practicing educators. The goal of teacher education is to equip teachers with the necessary pedagogical knowledge, subject expertise, and professional ethics to facilitate effective learning among students (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Teacher education programs typically include theoretical coursework and practical teaching experiences. According to Cochran-Smith (2023), these programs cover areas such as educational psychology, curriculum development, assessment strategies, and classroom management. Furthermore, teacher education is dynamic, adapting to educational reforms and societal needs (Shulman, 1987).

A critical component of teacher education is pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which Shulman (1987) defines as the blend of subject matter expertise and the ability to teach it effectively. This concept underscores the importance of both content mastery and instructional strategies in teacher preparation.

Moreover, the effectiveness of teacher education has been linked to student learning outcomes. Studies indicate that well-trained teachers positively impact student performance (Hattie, 2009). Continuous professional development also plays a vital role in ensuring teachers remain updated with modern teaching methodologies and technological advancements in education (Harding & Parsons, 2011).

In summary, teacher education is an essential process aimed at preparing competent and reflective educators. It integrates theoretical knowledge, practical training, and ongoing professional growth to enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning.

2.3 Models of Teacher Education (Concurrent and Consecutive)

Teacher education programs are developed within the demands of an educational system and may thus need to prepare student teachers to negotiate that system, and not only to be self-directed (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). In addition, teacher education must prepare teachers to play active roles in formulating the purposes, means, and ends of their work (Zeichner, 2009). According to Robinson (2019:13):

> Initial teacher education programs across the world bear many resemblances to one another in respect to their overall design features. Students generally follow courses that consist of foundational knowledge pertaining to education, like psychology or sociology, disciplinary knowledge in particular subject areas, and general and specific pedagogical knowledge. In addition, students are exposed to varying degrees of school placements. Despite these similarities in overall structure, the curriculum content and activities of teacher preparation may vary considerably, dependent on the underpinning conceptions of the goals and purposes of the program.

Shulman (1987) postulated that teacher education programs offer a combination of school and institution-based learning and are based on a shared view of the knowledge base for teaching. “Courses include those that teach the content knowledge of specific disciplines, general pedagogical knowledge, or broad principles and strategies of classroom organization; pedagogical content knowledge that teaches how to represent knowledge to others; knowledge of learners and their characteristics; knowledge of educational contexts; as well as knowledge of educational ends and purposes” (Shulman, 1987:8).

Furthermore, Yusuf (2022) pointed out that while there are models of teacher education, the most prevalent models globally are the concurrent and consecutive models. The concurrent model, also known as the integrated or simultaneous model, is characterized by the integration of academic coursework and practical teaching experiences from the outset of teacher preparation programs (Yusuf, 2022). Under this model, prospective teachers engage in classroom observations, field experiences, and student teaching concurrently with their academic coursework (Sharma & Raval, 2019). This integration allows for the immediate application of theoretical knowledge to real-world classroom settings, fostering a seamless transition from theory to practice (Sharma & Raval, 2019). On the other hand, the consecutive model, also known as the sequential or traditional model, follows a linear progression where academic coursework precedes practical teaching experiences (Yusuf, 2014). Prospective teachers complete their academic studies before undertaking supervised teaching practice, typically during a dedicated practicum or internship period (Yusuf, 2014).

Therefore, Yusuf (2014) analyzed that both the concurrent and consecutive models of teacher education offer unique approaches to preparing prospective teachers for the challenges of the classroom. The concurrent model emphasizes immediate application and integration of theory and practice, while the consecutive model prioritizes progressive development and focused preparation.

Incorporating key education courses in teacher education programs requires thoughtful integration strategies that leverage the strengths of both concurrent and consecutive models. By drawing on the principles of each model, teacher educators can design comprehensive and cohesive curricula that prepare prospective teachers to succeed in the classroom. Whether through simultaneous integration of theory and practice or sequential progression from coursework to practical experiences, the ultimate goal remains the same: to cultivate knowledgeable, skilled, and reflective teachers who are equipped to meet the diverse needs of 21st-century learners.

2.4 The Evolving Landscape of Teacher Education

The landscape of teacher education is dynamic and ever evolving. Cochran-Smith (2020) argued that teacher education must adapt to societal changes, technological advancements and shifting educational paradigms. This necessitates a continuous review and refinement of education courses to ensure that they remain relevant and responsive to emerging needs. In

addition, the landscape of teacher education has undergone dynamic transformations in response to societal, technological and pedagogical shifts. Darling-Hammond and Rothman (2011) highlighted that the evolving nature of education requires continuous adaptation in teacher preparation programs. Changes in the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and the integration of technology are pivotal elements in addressing the complexities of contemporary classrooms. Therefore, as education courses equip future teachers with the skills necessary for a rapidly changing world, there is need for programs to remain flexible, responsive and aligned to emerging educational paradigms.

The integration of technology has become a prominent aspect of the evolving landscape of teacher education. Research by Koehler and Mishra (2013) stressed the importance of preparing future teachers to navigate the digital age. Education courses must incorporate instructional technology components to enhance digital literacy, teaching with technology and integrating educational tools into pedagogical practices. As technology continues to play a transformative role in education, literature suggests that teacher education programs must evolve to ensure that educators are well versed in leveraging digital resources to enhance student learning.

The evolving landscape of teacher education also emphasizes the importance of inclusivity and diversity in education courses. Cochran-Smith (2023) argued for a broader understanding of diversity, including considerations of culture, language and individual learning needs. Education courses are now tasked with preparing teachers to foster inclusive classrooms that reflect the diversity of student populations. This shift entails revisiting curriculum content, pedagogical approaches, and assessment methods to ensure that teacher education programs are equipping teachers to address the diverse needs of their learners.

An essential aspect of the evolving landscape of teacher education is the recognition of the need for continuous professional development (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Literature emphasizes that education courses should not be viewed as a one-time training but as part of a lifelong learning journey for educators. Continuing professional development ensures that teachers remain current in their knowledge, skills and understanding of educational best practices. This evolution towards ongoing learning underscores the commitment of teacher education programs to producing teachers who are not only well prepared initially but also adaptable and responsive throughout their careers.

2.5 Curriculum Design and Teacher Education

Curriculum design is a critical aspect of teacher education. Research by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) highlighted the importance of a well-structured curriculum in preparing teachers for the complexities of the classroom. Effective education courses should align with contemporary educational theories and research, providing a strong foundation for prospective teachers. Effective curriculum design goes beyond content delivery; it also involves the integration of pedagogical theories. Cochran-Smith (2023) highlighted the importance of aligning education courses with contemporary pedagogical approaches. A curriculum informed by evidence-based teaching strategies enhances the pedagogical skills of future teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2023). Integrating a variety of teaching methods within the curriculum ensures that education courses prepare teachers to engage learners effectively and address diverse learning needs.

The evolving nature of education requires curriculum designs that are flexible and adaptable. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) argued that teacher education programs should be responsive to changes in educational paradigms, technology, and societal needs. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) ‘s literature suggest that a flexible curriculum design allows for the integration of emerging topics, teaching methodologies, and educational technologies. This adaptability ensures that education courses remain dynamic and capable of equipping future teachers with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of contemporary classrooms.

Curriculum design in teacher education is closely linked to educational standards and accountability measures. Research by Johnson (2018) emphasized the importance of aligning education courses with established standards to ensure program quality. Johnson (2018) ‘s literature suggests that a well-designed curriculum should reflect national and regional standards for teacher preparation, promoting consistency and accountability. Aligning education courses with these standards ensures that graduates meet the expectations set by regulatory bodies, contributing to the overall improvement of teacher education programs.

2.5.1 The views of Lecturers and Students about Teacher Education Courses

There has been a significant amount of research conducted globally on the views of lecturers and students regarding teacher education courses. In a study by Smith and Jones (2017), the researchers approached lecturers and students in various Schools of Education to participate in the study. In this study it was found that lecturers emphasized the importance of practical experience in teacher education courses. Students, on the other hand, highlighted the need for

more support and guidance from their lecturers. That study suggested that there was a disconnect between the expectations of lecturers and students in teacher education programs.

Similarly, another study by Chen and Wang (2018) recruited a sample of 30 lecturers and 50 students from teacher education programs in China to participate in the focus group discussions. Focus group discussions were held to allow for dialogue and interaction between participants, facilitating a deeper exploration of their views on the integration of technology in teacher education. The researchers transcribed and analyzed the discussions to identify recurring themes. The sample size was deemed appropriate for the qualitative research design to generate rich data on the views of the participants. They found that lecturers believed in the importance of integrating technology into teacher education courses. However, students expressed concerns about their ability to effectively use technology in their future teaching careers. In this study, the researchers revealed the need for ongoing professional development for both lecturers and students in order to effectively integrate technology as an education course into teacher education programs.

However, in a study conducted by Brown and White (2019) in the United Kingdom, they surveyed 75 lecturers and 150 students from Schools of Education in the United Kingdom. The sample size was sufficient to provide a representative snapshot of the differing views on the role of theory in teacher education courses. The surveys were distributed electronically and participants were asked to provide their opinions on the role of theory in teacher education courses. The researchers analyzed the quantitative data using statistical methods to compare the perspectives of lecturers and students. It was found that lecturers and students had differing views on the role of theory in teacher education courses. Lecturers emphasized the importance of theoretical knowledge, while students felt that practical, hands-on experience was more valuable. In this study, the researcher suggests that there may be a need to strike a balance between theory and practice in teacher education programs.

Overall, these studies Smith and Jones (2017), Chen and Wang (2018), and Brown and White (2019) revealed similar patterns of disconnect between the expectations of lecturers and students in teacher education programs, highlighting the importance of addressing these disparities through ongoing professional development and finding a balance between different perspectives.

A comparative analysis of studies conducted in various African countries reveals both similarities and differences in the priorities and challenges within teacher education programs.

In Kenya, Ngugi and Kamau (2016) found that lecturers prioritize the development of critical thinking skills in students, while students' express frustration with heavy workloads and lack of support. This suggests a need for additional resources and support in teacher education programs. Similarly, in Nigeria, Amadi and Okafor (2017) found that lecturers emphasize cultural competency, but students feel there is a lack of diversity in the curriculum and teaching staff, highlighting the need for promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity.

On the other hand, in South Africa, Tshabalala and Dlamini (2018) found that both lecturers and students recognize the importance of community engagement in teacher education courses, but have differing views on its integration into the curriculum. This suggests a need for clearer guidelines and expectations around community engagement. In Ghana, Nwosu and Ojo (2019) found differing views on assessment practices, with lecturers emphasizing rigorous assessments for student learning while students feel assessments are overly stressful and do not reflect their capabilities accurately. In this study, the researcher underscored the need for a more student-centered approach to assessment in teacher education programs.

The studies reviewed in this section show the importance of addressing the challenges and priorities identified in teacher education programs across Africa to ensure the effective preparation of educators for diverse and inclusive classrooms.

There is limited research available on the views of lecturers and students regarding teacher education courses in Zambia. However, a study by Mwape and Banda (2015) found that lecturers in a School of Education in Zambia emphasized the importance of practical experience and hands-on learning for their students. Students, on the other hand, expressed a desire for more mentorship and support from their lecturers. In this study, the researcher suggested that there may be a need for increased curriculum reviews in order for students to be well prepared during teacher education in Zambia.

In short, literature review showed that there are differing views between lecturers and students on various aspects of teacher education courses in Schools of Education globally and in Africa. It is important for Schools of Education to consider these differing perspectives and work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for both lecturers and students. Research was needed, particularly in Zambia, to better understand the views and experiences of individuals in teacher education programs.

2.5.2 The Alignment and Relevance of Teacher Education Courses and the Occupational Demands in the Teaching Profession.

Several studies have explored the alignment and relevance of teacher education courses offered in schools of education with the occupational demands in the teaching profession. In a global context, a study conducted by Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) having a sample size of 500 teachers and teacher educators from various countries on education, found that many teachers education programs do not adequately prepare future educators for the realities of the classroom. The study highlighted the need for more practical, hands-on experience and a focus on real-world teaching situations to better prepare teachers for the demands of their profession. Similarly, a study by Robinson and Leonard (2010) emphasized the importance of aligning teacher education programs with the needs of the students and communities they serve, as well as with the expectations of employers in the field of education. The study had a sample size of 300 teachers and education policymakers.

In Africa, several studies have also been conducted on this topic. For example, a study by Ndaruhutse (2015) examined the extent to which teacher education programs in African countries align with the goals and standards set by national education systems. The study had a sample size of 400 teacher educators and policymakers from various African countries. The study found significant discrepancies in the alignment of teacher education courses with the occupational demands in the teaching profession, highlighting the need for greater collaboration between education policymakers and teacher educators to ensure that programs are relevant and effective.

Another study by Mbaru (2017) focused specifically on teacher education programs in Kenya, with a sample size of 200 pre-service teachers and practicing educators, highlighting the need for greater emphasis on practical teaching skills and classroom management techniques. The study emphasized the importance of hands-on experience and mentorship opportunities for pre-service teachers to better prepare them for the challenges of the teaching profession.

In Zambia, a study by Ng'ongolo (2014) focused on the challenges facing teacher education programs in Zambia. The study had a sample size of 100 practicing teachers and teacher educators in Zambia. It highlighted the need for greater collaboration between teacher educators and practicing teachers to ensure that programs are meeting the needs of the profession. The study recommended a curriculum redesign to better align teacher education courses with the demands of the classroom.

The studies conducted globally and in Africa reveal a common theme of the need for greater alignment and relevance of teacher education courses with the occupational demands in the teaching profession. Practical, hands-on experience, mentorship opportunities, and collaboration between education stakeholders are all identified as key factors in ensuring that teacher education programs effectively prepare future educators for the challenges they will face in the classroom. Research is needed to explore the specific challenges and opportunities in Zambia and other African countries to better inform policy and practice in teacher education.

2.5.3 The Teacher Education Programme in relation to the Intended Learning Outcomes of the Education Courses

There have been several studies conducted globally on the teacher education programme in various schools of education, focusing on the intended learning outcomes of the education courses that are offered to students. In a study by Silva and Campbell (2018), they explored the alignment between the teacher education programme at a university in the UK and the intended learning outcomes of the education courses. The study used a mixed-methods approach in their study, combining surveys and interviews with faculty members and students in the teacher education programme. The sample size for their study included 100 students and 20 faculty members. The findings of the study indicated that there was a significant alignment between the two, with the programme effectively preparing students for their future roles as educators.

Similarly, a study by Li and Wu (2019) examined the teacher education programme at a university in China and its effectiveness in meeting the intended learning outcomes of the education courses. The study used a mixed-methods approach, conducting surveys and interviews with students and faculty members in the teacher education programme. The sample size for their study consisted of 150 students and 30 faculty members. The study found that while there were some areas for improvement, overall, the programme was successful in preparing students for their teaching careers.

In contrast, a study by Smith and Johnson (2017) looked at the teacher education programme at a university in the United States. They employed a qualitative research design, conducting interviews and focus groups with students in the teacher education programme. The sample size for their study included 50 students. The findings of the study revealed that there were significant gaps between the intended learning outcomes of the education courses and the actual experiences of students in the programme. This suggests that there may be room for improvement in how the programme is structured and delivered.

Moving on to studies conducted in Africa, a study by Jones and Banda (2018) examined the teacher education programme at a university in South Africa. They used a qualitative research design, conducting interviews and observations with students and faculty members in the teacher education programme. The sample size for their study consisted of 80 students and 10 faculty members. The findings of the study highlighted the importance of practical experience and fieldwork in preparing students for the challenges of teaching in diverse classroom settings. Similarly, a study by Okonkwo and Adenuga (2019) explored the teacher education programme at a university in Nigeria. They utilized a qualitative research design, conducting interviews and focus groups with students in the teacher education programme. The sample size for their study included 60 students. The findings of the study revealed that there was a need for more focus on pedagogy and classroom management in order to better meet the intended learning outcomes of the education courses.

2.6 Pedagogical Approaches in Teacher Education

Darling-Hammond (2019) underscored the importance of employing diverse pedagogical approaches within education courses. Darling-Hammond (2019) argued that a range of teaching methods, such as collaborative learning, experiential activities, and reflective practices, should be integrated into teacher preparation programs. The use of diverse pedagogical approaches ensures that future educators are exposed to a variety of teaching methods, allowing them to develop a versatile set of skills to meet the needs of diverse learners in their future classrooms.

Experiential learning is a key pedagogical approach gaining prominence in teacher education. Mishra and Koehler (2006) suggested that providing prospective teachers with hands-on experiences in real classroom settings enhances their practical skills and deepens their understanding of educational theories. Mishra and Koehler (2006) ‘s literature advocates for the incorporation of practicum experiences, internships, and teaching simulations within education courses to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that aspiring teachers are well prepared for the challenges of the teaching profession.

Active learning strategies are recognized as effective pedagogical tools in teacher education. Darling-Hammond (2019) explored the impact of active learning methods, such as case-based learning, problem-solving activities, and peer teaching, on the development of pedagogical skills in future educators. Darling-Hammond (2019) ‘s literature suggests that education

courses incorporating active learning strategies create an engaging and participatory learning environment, fostering critical thinking and collaboration among aspiring teachers.

The integration of technology into pedagogy has become a crucial aspect of teacher education. Mishra and Koehler (2006) emphasize the need for educators to be proficient in leveraging technology for teaching and learning. In addition, Mishra and Koehler (2006) ‘s literature suggests that education courses should include modules on educational technology, ensuring that future teachers are equipped with the digital skills necessary to navigate modern classrooms. Integrating technology into pedagogical approaches enhances the effectiveness of education courses, preparing teachers to incorporate digital tools into their teaching practices.

The shift towards competency-based education has gained traction in teacher preparation programs. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) argued that assessing teacher competencies is essential for ensuring that education courses focus not only on theoretical knowledge but also on the practical skills and dispositions needed for effective teaching. This approach emphasizes outcome-oriented education, aligning curriculum and assessments with the specific competencies required for successful teaching careers.

Teacher professional learning at its best is not merely about the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but the formation and mediation of teacher professional identity (Mockler, 2013). According to Mockler (2013:37):

> Within the teacher quality agenda, we have seen a shift in the past decade from a discourse focused on teaching quality to one focused on teacher quality. The shift is a subtle but important one. Embedded in a focus on teaching quality is a desire to support and foster teacher professional learning, to encourage pedagogical and curricular innovation and risk taking and to collaboratively determine and pursue good teaching practice. Conversely, embedded in the ensuing focus on teacher quality is a desire to narrowly measure and quantify teachers’ work (usually represented simply in test scores), to standardize practice and attribute blame to teachers where their students fail to ‘measure up’.

Mockler’s study focused on effective teacher development going beyond the acquisition of information and practical skills. It underscores the importance of shaping a teacher’s professional identity, which involves cultivating a sense of purpose, values, and a deep

understanding of their role in education. However, this study focussed on how an education course such as ethics plays a crucial role in shaping the professional identity of teachers.

The biggest impact on learner achievement is teacher quality and the most important teacher qualities are the ability and willingness to engage learners (Harding & Parsons, 2011). Teacher education courses fit logical program sequences; but, within courses, little seems consistent in teaching pedagogy (Harding & Parsons, 2011). Further, Harding and Parsons (2011) added that even within the standard courses teacher candidates experience during their undergraduate education, little seems standard about the topics they cover or the instructors they meet.

Additionally, in finding the importance of quality teachers: Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997) noted that more could be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor. Hattie (2003) 's meta-analysis also supports the influence of teachers on learning. His extensive literature review suggested that teachers make the difference for learners and that teaching excellence is the most powerful influence on achievement. According to Harding and Parsons (2011), Hattie encouraged feedback and monitoring that both informs teachers about the success of learners' learning but also informs teachers about their own success in teaching. Teaching is supposed to be an art, where pedagogical knowledge is more crucial than content knowledge (Harding & Parsons, 2011).

Therefore, Harding and Parsons (2011) study focused on improving teacher quality by ensuring that teacher education does not focus solely on content knowledge but on pedagogy. However, the study focusses on how assessment as an education course for instance provides teachers with essential pedagogical knowledge related to evaluating learning. Prospective teachers learn diverse assessment strategies, methods, and tools to measure understanding, skills, and progress effectively.

2.7 Global Trends in Teacher Education

In addition, Darling-Hammond (1993) endeavored to explain changes in teacher education by citing global changes including the growing complexity of society; the changing nature of the workforce; technology developments; and increasing multiculturalism" (Brady, 2000:1). According to Brady (2000:4):

> Curriculum developers should ensure that teacher education programs are producing prospective teachers who possess the desirable attributes of beginning teachers and who meet the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education. They should also re-examine programs to ensure that skill development is complemented by authentic reflection and not just serendipitous reflection and they should evaluate teacher education programs in the light of current policy and directions to ensure that they are responsive, formative and collaborative.

Brady (2000) 's study identified directions as well as priorities in contemporary teacher education in Australia, and indicated the challenges that confront leadership. However, this study focus for example, is how curriculum studies as an education course provides prospective teachers with the knowledge and skills to align their teaching practices with curriculum national standards. Incorporating curriculum studies as a core course in teacher education ensures that teachers are well versed in the principles of effective curriculum design, implementation and assessment, contributing to the overall quality of teacher preparation. Moreover, teachers with expertise in curriculum development can contribute to the continuous improvement of teacher education programs. They can assess the effectiveness of existing curricula, recommend adjustments to meet evolving standards, and ensure that prospective teachers are well prepared for the challenges of the profession.

"One of the central goals of global education is developing and promoting global perspectives" (Abdullahi, 2003:1). Yet public schools are not taking adequate and appropriate steps to teach and prepare students to understand the nature and complexity of global issues and problems (Merryfield, 2001). Abdullahi (2003) 's study focused on examining the disposition of social studies teachers in terms of teaching from a global perspective. Within that study, social studies teachers were expected to develop knowledge and understanding of issues and solutions as well as pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore, in her article "Global Trends in Higher Education Policies" Moyle (2015:1) postulated that:

> One of the purposes of education is to develop students' skills, knowledge and understandings of various disciplines. Education plays a role instilling those values required for intellectual independence, participating in a civil society, the promotion of citizenship and that of the common good. Teacher education has a heightened role in preparing students to take their place in society. Teacher education prepares teachers to enable them to educate children to move from learners in schools to participants not only in the economy, but more broadly in their society.

However, this study was about an analysis of key education courses in the teacher education programme at a University in Lusaka province, Zambia that are supposed to expose pre-service teachers to the knowledge they need in order to be well grounded educationists.

2.8 The Research Gap Addressed and Directions from Literature Review

The existing literature on teacher education has extensively explored various dimensions, including curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and global trends. However, there is a limited focus on the adequacy and alignment of education courses within teacher education programs in Zambia. While studies in other African contexts highlight challenges, research on how education courses in Zambian universities prepare pre-service teachers remains scarce. Additionally, there is minimal literature capturing the perspectives of lecturers and students regarding the relevance and practical application of these courses, making it difficult to identify areas for improvement.

Furthermore, while research acknowledges the evolving nature of teacher education in response to technological advancements and pedagogical shifts, there is little investigation into how Zambian institutions integrate these developments into their programs. The misalignment between teacher education curricula and real-world classroom demands has been noted, but there is insufficient research on which key education courses should be revised or added. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the adequacy of education courses in a teacher education program at a university in Lusaka, Zambia, to inform curriculum enhancements.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

In this chapter, the methodology that was used has been explained and this encompasses the research paradigm, research design, study area/site, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection procedures, description of instruments, trustworthiness, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994) defined a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs or worldviews that guide research action or an investigation. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) defined research paradigms as human constructions, which deal with first principles indicating where the researcher is coming from so as to construct meaning embedded in data. Therefore, this study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm to explore the intricacies and effectiveness of the teacher education programme at a university in Lusaka province, Zambia, with a particular focus on education courses.

This qualitative approach was deemed suitable for this investigation as it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives, experiences, and the contextual factors influencing the teacher education programme at a particular University in Lusaka, Zambia. According to Moustakas (1994):

> There are several common qualities the research would adopt through following the interpretivist paradigm which can be summarized as the following: Firstly, the research would focus on the whole experience rather than considering certain parts of it. Secondly, questions and problems identification development of the research would be mainly influenced by the researcher in terms of interest, involvement as well as commitment. Thirdly, would enable researchers to explore further depth of individual experiences through in formal discussions and interviews. Fourthly, exploration of human experiences in depth through adoption of qualitative designs and methodologies. Fifthly, it would enable usage of experience as a highly important aspect and contribution to support scientific research. Sixthly, it would enable researchers to further explore in depth throughout individual experiences rather than considering generalized measurements or expectations as given in the positivist paradigm. Seventh, experience is largely integrated within subjects and objects leading to valuable findings and insights.

By using this approach, the researcher aimed to explore the perspectives, beliefs, and experiences of students, lecturers as well as key stakeholders, allowing for a deeper

understanding of the factors that influence the effectiveness of the teacher education programme.

Furthermore, the interpretivist research paradigm emphasizes the subjective nature of knowledge and the importance of the researcher's role in interpreting and making sense of the data collected (Creswell, 2014). This paradigm was well-suited for this research as it acknowledged the multiple perspectives involved in examining the teacher education programme at a University in Lusaka, Zambia. By adopting an interpretivist approach, the research was able to uncover the underlying meanings and social constructs that shape the experiences of those involved in the teacher education programme, ultimately providing valuable insights for improving the programme in the future.

3.3 Research Design

According to Sturman (1997:61) “a case study is a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon”. Additionally, Sagadin (1991:18) states that a “case study is used when we analyze and describe, for example each person individually (his or her activity, special needs, life situation, life history, etc.), a group of people (a school department, a group of students with special needs, teaching staff, etc.), individual institutions or a problem (or several problems), process, phenomenon or event in a particular institution, etc. in detail”.

Therefore, this study employed a case study research design to examine the teacher education programme at a university in Lusaka, Zambia, focusing specifically on the education courses offered. A case study approach was chosen for this study because it allowed for an in-depth, contextualized exploration of phenomena within their real-life settings. This design is particularly suitable for understanding the multifaceted aspects of the teacher education programme, including curriculum design, teaching methods and student experiences.

3.4 Study Site

The case selected for this study focussed on the examination of the teacher education programme at one university in Lusaka province, Zambia, specifically in the School of Education. The University settled for is one of the leading institutions in Zambia, known for its rigorous preparation of teachers. Their school of education offers a wide range of education courses that are designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in the field of education. These courses cover various aspects of teaching, curriculum development, assessment, and educational leadership. The faculty members at the School of Education are experienced lecturers and researchers who are dedicated to providing high-

quality education to their students. According to Chabala and Nyanji (2019) this particular institution aims to produce highly competent and effective teachers who will contribute positively to the development of the education sector in Zambia.

3.5 Target population

According to Creswell (2014), population refers to a larger group with similar features within a specific context. This group gives researchers a basic grasp of the demographic or institutional environment that they want to study (Willie, 2022). In contrast, the target population represents specific subsets within this larger cohort, delineated by predefined criteria that align with the research objectives (Alvi, 2016). This difference helps ensure that research questions are suited to the population of interest's particular traits and demands, improving validity and applicability (Willie, 2022).

Therefore, the target population were all lecturers who were teaching education courses in the school of education, the school of education Dean who delegated his interview to the Assistant Dean in charge of undergraduate studies in the school of education, fourth year students in the school of education because they were almost completing their studies, the Registrar from the Teaching Council of Zambia because this office has the legal mandate to register teachers and the Deputy Director in charge of pre-service teachers from the Directorate of Teacher Education and Specialized Services in the Ministry of Education because they are the ones who suggest and influence policy on the type of courses to be taught during teacher education.

3.6 Sample size

According to Patton (1990) rules do not apply for sample size in a qualitative inquiry. The most important aspect in qualitative research is saturation which is a point where all the themes and categories have saturated and new data generated (Morse, 2000). Nevertheless, sample size is defined as the subset of the whole population which is being investigated by a researcher and whose characteristics may be generalized to the entire population (Bless & Achola, 1988).

In this qualitative study, the sample comprised of 42 respondents broken down as follows; 15 lecturers, 24 students, 1 Dean, 1 Registrar and 1 Deputy Director.

3.7 Sampling Techniques

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research often utilizes participants who have direct knowledge and experience related to the research topic, making them ideal candidates for providing in-depth and rich data for analysis. In order to appreciate this selection

process, Kombo and Tromp (2006) defined sampling as a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group.

This study therefore employed purposive sampling technique which is defined by Msabila and Nalaila (2013) as a purposive technique which involves handpicking of individuals from the population based on the researcher's judgment or knowledge. In other words, purposive sampling method is based on the judgment of the researcher regarding the characteristics of a representative sample (Bless & Achola, 1988).

3.7.1. Sampling of Lecturers

In this study, the researcher employed expert purposive sampling to select fifteen lecturers teaching education and teaching methodology courses in the School of Education. These lecturers were chosen from diverse departments which included Mathematics and Science, Library and Information Science, Languages and Social Sciences, Primary Education, Educational Psychology and Social Sciences Education, were selected for their specialized expertise in education course content and teaching methodologies. This targeted sampling approach enabled the researcher to gather in-depth insights from individuals with a direct influence on the development and delivery of education courses.

3.7.2. Sampling of Ministry of Education Officials in charge of Teacher Education

The researcher utilized expert purposive sampling to select 2 key officials from the Ministry of Education who possess specialized knowledge and authority in teacher education standards and policies. Specifically, the Registrar from the Teaching Council of Zambia and the Pre-Service Deputy Director from the Directorate of Teacher Education and Specialized Services were chosen for their direct roles in regulating and guiding teacher education practices in Zambia. These officials were expected to provide informed perspectives on current educational policies, course requirements and gaps within the teacher education program.

3.7.3. Sampling of University Dean

The researcher used expert purposive sampling to strategically select the School of Education Dean who was chosen for their comprehensive understanding of the curriculum and administrative decisions affecting course offerings. However, the Dean delegated responsibility to the Assistant Dean in charge of undergraduates, who holds direct, in-depth knowledge of undergraduate education courses and student needs. This sampling method allowed the researcher to obtain information from a highly informed perspective while

ensuring efficient and relevant input, enhancing the study's insights into course adequacy and alignment with professional demands in teacher education.

3.7.4. Sampling of Students

In this study, the researcher employed homogeneous purposive sampling to select participants for focus group discussions, targeting a specific subset of students who shared similar characteristics relevant to the research objectives. From the School of Education, six fourth- and final-year students were selected from each of the four distinct degree programs: Bachelor of Arts with Education, Bachelor of Education in Special Education, Bachelor of Agricultural Science with Education, and Bachelor of Science in Secondary Mathematics and Science. This selection method ensured that participants represented a similar academic standing and specialization within their respective fields, allowing for a focused exploration of their shared experiences and perspectives. By grouping these 24 students into focus groups, the researcher facilitated in-depth discussions, enhancing the understanding of common themes and challenges faced by students across these educational programs. According to Onwuegbuzie (2004), homogenous purposive sampling involves individuals, groups, or settings because they all possess similar characteristics or attributes. Participants are selected for the study based on membership in a sub-group or unit that has specific characteristics and this sampling approach is often used to select focus groups (Onwuegbuzie, 2004). There was one focus group discussion per programme administered to students.

3.8. Data Collection Procedure

According to Cresswell (2007), data collection procedure implies setting the boundaries for the study and collection of data as well as the steps taken in gathering information to answer research questions. The researcher in this study got ethical clearance from a University in Lusaka, Zambia Ethics Committee before data collection.

The researcher then obtained an introductory letter from the Assistant Dean Postgraduate in the School of Education at a University in Lusaka, Zambia to facilitate data collection in the field. This enabled the researcher to interact with key informants without interference. Additionally, the researcher got consent through the provision of a consent form from participants before research instruments are administered.

Using semi-structured interview guides, the researcher personally interviewed the Assistant Director of pre-service teacher education at Teacher Education and Specialized Services, the Registrar of the Teaching Council of Zambia, the Dean of the School of Education, and

lecturers in the School of Education who teach education and methodology courses. Additionally, 24 fourth- and final-year students from 4 programmes at a university in Lusaka, Zambia, participated in focus group discussions of 6 students each facilitated by a discussion guide. To further enhance the data, the researcher also conducted observations using an observation guide and checklist, examining physical facilities, equipment, and materials, as well as observing human interactions and the learning program. This multi-method approach provided a thorough understanding of the resources and instructional practices within the teacher education program.

3.9. Description of Research Instruments

According to Kasonde (2014), research instruments are tools that a researcher uses in collecting requisite data. Therefore, two types of data collection instruments were employed in this study and these were focus group discussion guides and Semi-structured interview guides.

3.9.1 Focus Group Discussion Guide for Students

According to Onwuegbuzie (2004) focus group discussions are a qualitative research method used to gather detailed information and insights from a group of participants. These discussions involve a small group of people, typically 6-12 individuals, who are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research topic. The session is usually facilitated by a moderator or researcher who guides the discussion, asking open-ended questions to encourage participants to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions (Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, Mulenga (2015) cautioned that there must be scrupulous preparation and facilitation in order to avoid some members of the group dominating other group members during an interview session so as to encourage equal participation from all group members.

The purpose of focus group discussions is to explore participants' attitudes, perceptions, and feelings about a particular subject in depth. Unlike one-on-one interviews, focus groups capitalize on the dynamic interaction between participants, which can lead to the emergence of new ideas and insights that might not surface in individual interviews (Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

In this study, a focus group discussion was used to collect information from four groups of fourth year students from four different school of education programmes at a University in Lusaka, Zambia which include; the Bachelor of Arts with Education, Bachelor of Education in Special Education, Bachelor of Agricultural Science with Education and Bachelor of Education in Secondary Mathematics and Science. The student groups were deliberately

separated according to programmes in order for each group to give their own opinions according to their experiences in their particular programme. The Ministry of Education (2023:31) in the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework has recommended eight key education foundation courses that every pre-service teacher must have taken by the time they complete the programme and so their views were centered on these courses.

3.9.2 Semi-structured interview guide for the Registrar-Teaching Council of Zambia

A semi-structured interview guide was used to conduct an interview with the registrar at Teaching Council of Zambia in order to collect information on the qualities they want to see in the teachers they register. The advantage of using a semi-structured interview guide is that it allows the interviewer generate new questions during the interview because of what the interviewee says, and this provides a comprehensive apprehension of the phenomenon (Taylor, 2008). Thus, probing helped the researcher get more clarity on information being received. Semi-structured interviews give greater depth than a questionnaire because the researcher can probe or encourage respondents to elaborate their answers and also can crosscheck information (Mulenga 2015).

3.9.3 Semi-structured interview guide for Deputy Director-Pre-service Teachers

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide to conduct an interview with the Deputy Director at the Directorate of Teacher Education and Specialized Services in charge of pre-service teacher education in order to collect information on the type of education courses they have suggested should be taken by those who undergo teacher preparation as well as to find out whether there is compliance from teacher preparation institutions in that regard.

3.9.4 Semi-structured interview guide for Dean-School of Education

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared by the researcher to conduct an interview with the Dean in the school of Education in order to collect information on any specific skills or knowledge areas that are lacking in the current teacher education programme. However, the Dean delegated the Assistant Dean in charge of undergraduate studies to take up his role.

3.9.5 Semi-structured interview guide for Assistant Dean-Undergraduate Studies

The researcher used a semi-structured interview to conduct an interview with the Assistant Dean in charge of undergraduate studies in the school of education at a University in Zambia. This interview guide was used to collect information on how they coordinate with faculty to ensure the curriculum aligns with the teacher education programme’s goals as well as what processes are in place for curriculum reviews.

3.9.6 Semi-structured interview guide for Lecturers-School of Education

A semi-structured was used to conduct interviews with lecturers teaching education courses in the school of education at a University in Zambia. This interview guide helped the researcher collect information on their experiences in developing the teacher education curriculum as well as their suggestion on what education courses are key for pre-service teacher preparation.

3.10 Trustworthiness

According to Patton (1990), credibility, dependability, transferability, conformability and authenticity are used to describe what characterizes the aspects of trustworthiness of data in a qualitative study. In addition, Bless and Achola (1988) contended that researchers do not use instruments with established metrics to determine validity and reliability in qualitative studies and so trustworthiness is used to establish it. Therefore, in this study, trustworthiness focussed on credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability of the study.

3.10.1 Credibility

In order to achieve truth and accuracy in research findings, credibility aspects were observed. Kombo and Tromp (2006) defined credibility as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. In this study, prolonged engagement with participants was essential in ensuring credibility. This involved spending sufficient time with participants to build trust and gather in-depth data, engaging in repeated interactions to fully understand the context, and capturing a wide range of perspectives. Triangulation is another critical strategy which was used to achieve credibility and it was practiced by using multiple data sources such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to cross-verify information. Incorporating various perspectives from different participant groups, such as the assistant dean, and lecturers, further strengthened credibility of the study.

3.10.2 Transferability

According to Patton (1990), transferability is the degree to which a study's findings can be transferred to other contexts, settings or respondents. Transferability was ensured through thick description, which involves providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants and findings. This includes comprehensive background information that allows readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Purposeful sampling is another strategy, selecting participants who can provide rich, relevant, and diverse perspectives on the research topic, ensuring that the sample includes individuals with varied experiences related to the teacher education programme.

3.10.3 Dependability

Newby (2010) pointed out that dependability refers to the stability of findings over time. The researcher ensured dependability is achieved by maintaining an audit trail, which involves keeping detailed records of the research process, including data collection and analysis procedures, and documenting decisions made during the study to provide transparency and allow for replication.

3.10.4 Conformability

Conformability refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be conformed or corroborated by other researchers (Creswell 2007). In this study, the researcher made certain that the findings were grounded in the participants' responses, free from any potential biases or personal motivations. To achieve this, the researcher recorded the interviews and executed member checking. Achieving member checking involved actively engaging participants in the validation of the data and findings. This process ensured that the interpretations and conclusions drawn by the researcher accurately reflect the participants' perspectives and experiences. To implement member checking, the researcher shared summaries, themes, or transcripts of the data with the participants and invited their feedback. Participants reviewed these materials to confirm the accuracy, provide additional insights, or correct any misunderstandings. This collaborative validation step enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the research by incorporating participants' voices and ensuring that their views are authentically represented.

3.11 Data Analysis

Kombo and Tromp (2006) postulated that data analysis involves examining the information gathered in a survey or experiment and drawing conclusions and inferences from it. The collected data was carefully transcribed and later analyzed thematically. This method in the study involved identifying emerging themes within the qualitative data. The following six-phase processes were used: data familiarization, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and lastly writing a report. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. This process involves systematically coding and categorizing data to identify recurring themes and patterns. After subjectively analyzing and interpreting the themes to extract the message they contained, the researcher presented and explained meaningfully in a manner that addresses the research questions in chapter four through the descriptions in the form of words, phrases and sentences,

and the direct quotation from the study participants basing on the research objectives or questions. Additionally, the study findings were not only presented in chapter four but also discussed in chapter five with supporting citations from different authors to justify the findings of this study. After the presentation, discussions and justification, the researcher came up with the conclusions, recommendations, suggestions and recommendations for further research which were systematically presented in chapter six of the study. The analysis was guided by the research questions and objectives of the study to ensure that all relevant themes are identified and explored in depth (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Miles and Huberman (1994) outlined that qualitative data analysis includes three primary activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. However, qualitative data analysis does not rely on a single universally applicable methodology; the chosen approach depends on the study's specific objectives (Ghosh, 2013). In this study, most data analysis was conducted during the data collection phase, with additional analysis following the completion of data collection. From the beginning, the researcher immersed themselves in the collected data by continuously listening to interview recordings and carefully reading through the material, noting themes or codes. The process involved synthesizing the extensive interviews and information gathered, using the research questions to guide the categorization of data by similar themes.

Constant comparative method was used to analyze data manually. According to Neuman (2003), this method involves three primary stages. According to Mulenga (2015), the first stage is open coding which involves reading through raw data, such as interview transcripts, and identifying themes or categories allowing the researcher to ensure that the data aligns with the research questions and objectives. The second stage, axial coding, focuses on identifying relationships among codes, comparing codes, and creating categories that connect related codes. This process allowed the researcher to explore how major categories related to each other and their subcategories (Neuman, 2003).

The final pass, selective coding, is aimed at synthesizing identified themes and examining how they interrelate. This involves comparing categories, establishing connections, and identifying a core category to unify them. To validate the accuracy of these themes, member checking was used, where participants reviewed and confirmed that the themes reflected their perspectives (Adu & Okeke, 2022). Transcripts were read multiple times to integrate themes, which were

then used to organize and discuss findings, supported by relevant verbatim quotes (Mulenga, 2015).

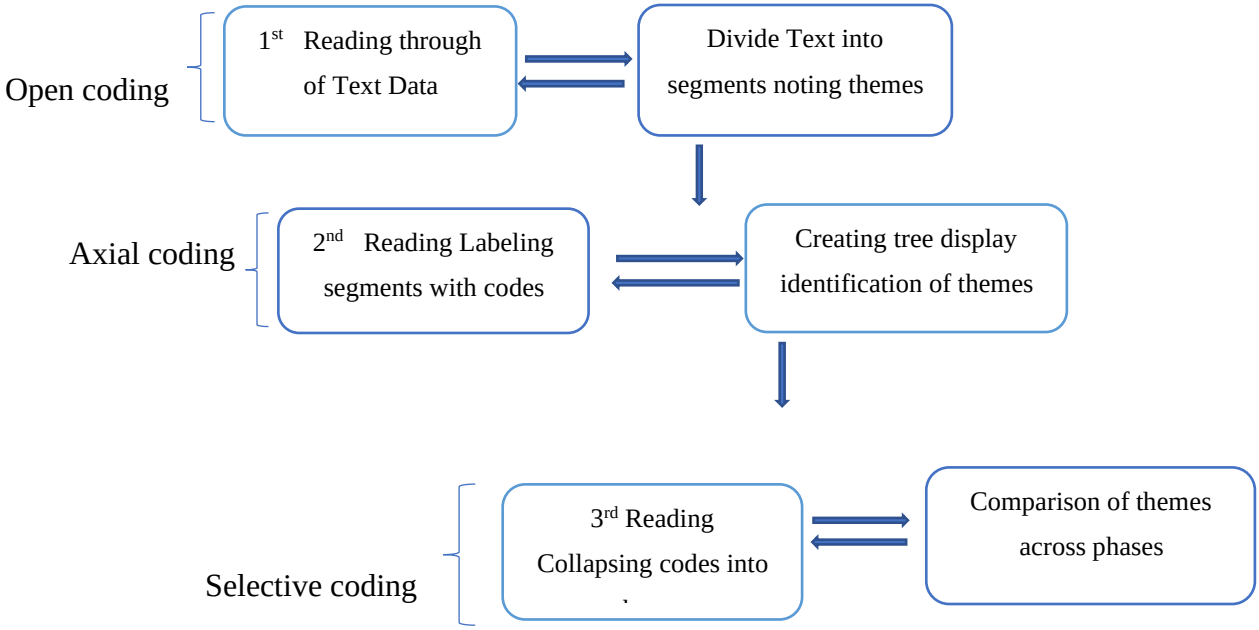

Figure 2.0: Constant comparative method of data analysis

Source: Mulenga (2015:99)

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues in educational research can be particularly complex and nuanced, often placing researchers in challenging moral dilemmas that may seem difficult to resolve (Cohen, 2000). Mulenga (2015) observed that researchers could potentially cause harm to the individuals or groups they study if participants experience anxiety, stress, guilt, or damage to their self-esteem during data collection and from the interpretations of the data they provide. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research to benefit both the researcher and the participants. Ethical issues pertain to two groups: the researchers, who must understand their obligations and responsibilities, and the participants, whose fundamental rights must be protected. Consequently, the researcher sought approval from the University of Zambia's Directorate of Research, Innovation, and Development.

In this study, participants were informed about the overall purpose of the research. The researcher highlighted that the study is academic in nature and is being conducted to fulfill a requirement for a masters program in education at the University of Zambia. Further, data from the study was openly shared with the scientific community through a repository or archive to

increase visibility and impact, allowing for verification of findings and further development. Participants' identities and responses remained confidential and anonymized during data analysis and reporting, with only aggregated data being included in the final research report. Throughout the study, participants were being treated with respect and their perspectives will be valued.

3.12.1 Reciprocity

In research, participants' voluntary involvement and generosity are sometimes reciprocated with favors or payments, either in cash or in kind, from the researcher. Mulenga (2015) indicated that this can help build rapport between the researcher and participants, and can be seen as a way of honoring the participants' contributions to the study. Nevertheless, in this study, the principle of reciprocity was upheld to acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of participants. This involves recognizing the time and effort participants invest in the study and expressing gratitude in non-monetary ways.

The research aimed to offer mutual benefits by ensuring that the findings provide value to the participants, potentially offering insights or outcomes that could benefit their community or professional practice. Engaging participants in discussions about how the research outcomes might be shared and utilized for their benefit further enhanced mutual understanding. Throughout the research process, participants were treated with respect and their dignity was maintained, ensuring they felt valued and heard.

3.12.2 Confidentiality Assurance

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), Confidentiality in research implies that data identifying the participants will not be disclosed. To protect participants' confidentiality, stringent data protection measures were implemented. This includes secure storage and handling of sensitive information, as well as the use of anonymization techniques such as assigning codes to ensure participants' identities are not revealed. Participants' privacy was respected by conducting interviews and discussions in a manner that ensures confidentiality. Clear communication was provided about how their data would be used, who would have access to it, and the duration of data retention. These confidentiality protocols will be clearly communicated to participants, ensuring they are aware of the measures in place to safeguard their privacy.

3.12.3 Informed Consent

According to Cohen (2007), Informed consent is a critical component of this research. In this study, participants were provided with comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits in a clear and understandable manner, using plain language to ensure full comprehension. It was emphasized that participation is entirely voluntary and that participants can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences, ensuring there is no coercion or undue influence. Additionally, the consent process was reiterated periodically throughout the study, especially if significant changes to the research procedures occur, confirming participants' willingness to continue their involvement and addressing any new concerns or questions they may have.

3.13 Summary

In this chapter, details of the methodology to be used were explained and this encompassed research paradigm, research design, study area/site, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection procedure, description of instruments, trustworthiness, data analysis and ethical considerations. In the next chapter, research findings of this study were presented.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Overview

The previous chapter is a description of the qualitative research methodology which was used in this study. The results have been presented according to the themes that emerged from the data which was analyzed after it was collected using interview guides and focus group discussion guides. The following were the research questions that the research was trying to answer.

1. What were the views of lecturers and students about the teacher education courses at a University in Zambia?
2. What were the gaps in the education courses offered at a University in Zambia against the occupational demands of the teaching profession?
3. What were the key education courses that should be added to the teacher education programme at a University in Zambia to give it latitude to develop competent teachers?

4.1 Findings of the study

To obtain the results presented in this section, the researcher employed a qualitative research design, specifically the case study design. It is important to note that the interview schedules contained questions aligned with the research objectives. During data analysis, the researcher identified themes which were related to the research objectives, as well as emerging themes based on the participants' responses. In presenting the participants' responses as a way of providing evidence, their exact words were used whenever possible, with paraphrasing applied only when necessary. Additionally, some ideas were similar and, therefore, could be classified into more than one category.

4.2 Teacher education courses at a University in Zambia

In research question 1, the researcher explored the views of lecturers and students regarding teacher education courses that were taught. Analyzed data showed that they were two main themes that emerged from it namely; a focus on the disconnect between teacher education and school reality as well as the significance of education courses in achieving holistic teacher preparation.

4.2.1 The disconnect between Teacher Education and School Reality

During interviews with lecturers, the researcher discovered that there were practical challenges of preparing student teachers for the realities of the classroom and the educational environment. This is as narrated by lecturer 1 who said the following after being asked about their overall perception of the teacher education courses offered at his university in relation to the quality of students' readiness to become educationists;

> *Well, the teacher education programs are okay even though some student teachers choose careers willingly while others are forced into specific careers. The courses we offer are okay but this issue plays a key role in performance. From my experience as a teacher educator, I have come across students who are willing to be teachers, and they pay attention to what they want to be. However, others are forced into this program, and you see the struggles they go through. They do not pay attention, and sometimes, in these classes, you have to force them to be present. It comes down to their background, willingness, and what drives them to pursue this program.*

When asked the same question, Lecturer 3 explained that;

> *The foundation courses offered at this university in the School of Education, if you're looking at education courses, begin right in first year to prepare students for actual school settings. They provide a broader context, such as Sociology of Education, which examines the social context of learning. Learning is contextual; it does not take place in a vacuum. There is always a social context. So, to answer your question, the courses we offer provide enough foundation for our student teachers to be ready for the world of work.*

This view shows the importance of education courses in teacher education in preparing students for school realities. However, in an interview with one of the lecturers, it was revealed that preparation for realities of the school environment is an issue that is beyond the lecturer's control, when asked about their overall perception of the teacher education programs offered at their university in relation to the quality of students' readiness to become educationists, Lecturer 2 said that;

> *In the practical sense, I think we are lacking. If you look at our teachers, you will find that they are skilled in theoretical understanding, but I wouldn't say the same about practical skills. We do the knowledge part well, but I believe the skills are lacking due to a lack of infrastructure. If I were to give it a percentage, I would say practical skills are under 10%.*

In addition, Lecturer 4 explained that;

> *the teacher education program is well thought out, and the content is appropriate in most programs. However, the challenge lies in linking theory to practice. Most education courses such as Information Communication Technology and Curriculum studies that they as teachers should be taking as core courses according to the Ministry of Education are optional.*

The views from the lecturers indicated that the quality of education is only as strong as its weakest link.

The researcher further asked lecturers whether the core education courses offered were comprehensive enough to cover all necessary aspects of teacher education. Lecturer 6 said that;

> *There are many aspects missing in how we prepare our student teachers. Hence, we have these complaints from schools that students from this university are not performing well when it comes to teaching. This comes back to us as teacher educators because something is lacking. We are relying on research such as yours to probably bring to light the courses that ought to be core for our students.*

Additionally, Lecturer 4 also shared that;

> *I'm an external examiner for most of the colleges affiliated with this university that offer diploma programs. I have reviewed their curriculum and moderated coursework. I see the effort put into preparing teachers, but this institution follows traditional methods of teacher education. For instance, values such as appropriate dressing which are key for teachers as role models are not*

emphasized in the core education courses. So, the core courses we have are not enough to cover all the necessary aspects of teacher education if you ask me.

In addition, Lecturer 7 asserted that;

We have received reports of teachers dressing inappropriately during teaching practice, some missing work, and others leaving school early. These are not the values teachers should have. The core education courses we claim to be comprehensive should include all these key aspects but what is prevailing is that education courses with all these values are offered as electives. We seriously need a revision of the curriculum; it has been due for a long time now.

The statements reveal behavioral and ethical gaps among student teachers, which are rooted in the training environment, thereby, stressing incomprehensiveness of the core education courses offered to cover all necessary aspects of teacher education at the university.

Lecturers were asked on whether they think the teacher education curriculum at the university is up-to-date with current educational trends and practices from the education courses point of view. Lecturer 10 stated that;

You see, in trying to be current with educational trends and practices, stakeholder engagement is important because we invite people from the industry. We ask to say, if we talk of a teacher, how should that teacher look like? What knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values should they possess? This ensures our programs and courses offered align with modern practices like Information Communication Technology.

As much as stakeholder engagement is key in staying abreast with current trends, Information Communication Technology remains an elective course despite the Ministry of Education who are key stakeholders prescribing it as a core course.

However, Lecturer 7 pin pointed why they think ICT is still not offered as a core education course at the university despite being a current practice prescription for teachers by stating that;

> *While the curriculum covers most aspects, some programs are overdue for review. For instance, the ICT course introduced in 2016 has never been reviewed, although it should happen every five years per education authority guidelines. Budget constraints are a major challenge, as departments lack funds for curriculum review workshops. Every student teacher is now supposed to take that course but here we are.*

The delayed review of programs highlights a critical challenge in maintaining the relevance and quality of teacher preparation curricula. Regular updates are essential to address emerging trends and challenges in the teacher education program.

4.2.2 Significance of education courses in achieving holistic teacher preparation

In order to further respond to research question 1, the researcher sought to explore the views of students about the education courses prescribed as key for teacher preparation by the Ministry of Education through the 2023 Zambia Education Curriculum Framework as indicated in Chapter 3. Across all courses, students recognize the need for teacher education to prepare them for diverse roles, from classroom instruction to leadership, counseling, and adapting to technological advancements.

Students were asked over what they think is the importance of education administration and management as one of the prescribed education courses by the ministry. The researcher found that students emphasize the importance of Education Administration and Management in equipping future teachers with skills to manage schools and departments effectively. They highlight the need for structured knowledge to complement experience, ensuring readiness for leadership roles. In FGDs 3 and 4, students shared that;

> *Education Administration and Management helps us to understand what roles we are supposed to take as teachers as it's a field where we learn about management. There is a hierarchy that needs to be followed where we have head teachers, we have deputies and then we have teachers. So, Education Administration and Management helps us understand everything to do with managing a school or department.*

In addition, other students in FGDs 1 and 2 had this to say;

> *Education administration and management is very relevant because you can be given to head a department or a school not because you have done Education administration and management as a course but because you have served for a good period but experience without management skills is not enough.*

The students highlighted a practical acknowledgment of the value of education administration in preparing teachers for their potential leadership responsibilities.

In still trying to respond to research question one, the researcher asked students over the importance of curriculum studies as another prescribed education course by the Ministry of Education. In FGDs 2 and 3, the students pointed out that;

> *About curriculum studies, it is embarrassing to actually agree with participant A that I am one of the student teachers who really wanted to learn about the curriculum but I had to choose another elective because of ignorance. Curriculum studies as an education course is very important for us student teachers because we know that the curriculum goes hand in hand with what is in the society. They do not just make it out of anywhere. They have to see what's in the society, then they put it in the curriculum so that it should be beneficial to the society*. We need to understand all that.

In the same vein, students in FGD 1 and FGD 4 shared that;

> *So for curriculum studies, I am not taking that course, I have never taken it, but with the little knowledge I know about it, I feel it is something that can add value to a teacher, because it will help you know what you have to teach, know when to teach it, and how you should teach it.*

Students stressed the critical role of Curriculum Studies in aligning teaching practices with societal needs. They recognize the curriculum as a tool to bridge societal realities and educational content, fostering meaningful and impactful learning.

The researcher further asked the students over what value they see in guidance and counselling as another ministry of education prescribed education course for their provision of learner support and professional development. Students in FGDs 2 and 4 affirmed that;

> *Guidance and counselling is also another important aspect in our preparation as teachers. I do not know the courses that are being offered here for guidance and counseling. Of course, all schools have a guidance and counseling teacher or office specifically for that but I feel they do not offer the guidance to all the learners in school because they are overwhelmed at times. So, the inclusion of guidance and counselling as an education course for every student teacher here should be more emphasized. I know there's guidance and counselling as an education course but it's not everyone who takes it that much we know.*

Additionally, students from FGDs 1 and 3 agreed that;

> *On several occasions, parents choose careers for their children but through guidance and counseling, a child can be nurtured and guided to go for a career where this child has a passion. We need this course because our learners out there need our knowledge in it and not relying on experience which we may not apply to all situations learners may go through.*

FGD 3 and FGD 4 students shared a similar sentiment saying;

> *Learners come from different families where a learner or a child may be having some challenges in one way or another, so, Guidance and Counselling course is not supposed to be an option.*

In addition, students in FGD 2 disclosed that;

> *It is important because in the guidance and counseling course you learn how to deal with different problems, how to approach challenges of different pupils. And so, if we are equipped with those skills or that knowledge, I think it would be good in the setting of the school or interacting with those learners. When a learner comes with a challenge, you will be able to understand that learner's*

challenge and you have the knowledge it takes for you to attend to the learner's challenges. I think in those times it is a valuable course for all student teachers.

The views on Guidance and Counselling underscore its value in addressing learners' diverse challenges, guiding career paths, and fostering emotional resilience. Students advocate for its universal inclusion to prepare teachers for holistic learner support.

The researcher asked students about their thoughts on the role of Information Communication Technology in their future teaching career as another ministry of education prescribed education course. In FGD 4, students affirmed that;

This is a very crucial course and we all need it as student teachers. Now we are talking about advanced technology which can be used in the teaching environment and we need to move with change because it is a global thing right? And in most developed countries we are seeing these changes to be so feasible compared to here where you do not even have computers anyway.

Further, students in FGDs 1 and 3 explained;

ICT skills have to be given to every student teacher at this moment because the world has evolved as you can see. Most of the things that we are dealing with are things that need you to understand how a computer works and how to work with the computer in order for you to deliver lessons. It is embarrassing to have a teacher who doesn't even know how to make a PowerPoint presentation.

Thus, FGD 1 students added that;

we should be able to learn the ICT education course as 21st Century student teachers. So I also strongly feel that ICT in education should also be incorporated in what student teachers are being taught at university and college levels, because like my colleague said, it would really be embarrassing when you go out there on your teaching practice and then you find that you do not know how to make a PowerPoint.

The students' advocacy for ICT education as a core component of 21st-century teacher preparation reinforces the idea that to be effective in the modern classroom, teachers must be equipped with the necessary ICT skills to navigate an increasingly digital world.

Furthermore, the students were asked whether they think financial education as an education course is necessary for their preparation as a teacher. In most of the FGDs, students agreed to its necessity and in FGD 4, one student explained that;

> *I feel it is important to learn financial education because we as student teachers will learn about financial discipline which is the most important thing, how to manage funds. We have seen teachers who are getting loans, they do not know about the interest. So if you learn about financial education, you will know all those things about how you decide about the finances. Even the decisions that you make, there will be good decisions towards the finances.*

In addition, students in FGDs 1 and 2 further argued that;

> *Financial literacy is very important because we are actually living in a world of finances where we are dealing with these things and every individual is attached to these financial issues. So, if we are to learn, for example, how to invest, how to spend money and how to save correctly, I think it would really be helpful.*

By equipping student teachers with these skills, they can better manage their own finances, which will positively impact their teaching practice and personal lives.

Special and inclusive education is another education course prescribed by the ministry for teacher preparation and so, the researcher further asked students on how prepared they feel to handle special and inclusive education needs in their future classrooms. In most of the focus group discussions, students in FGD 1 shared that;

> *The inclusion of special and inclusive education at teacher preparation level will assist us as student teachers to identify these special learners among the normal in class and we will be able to assist them in a school setup because we*

will be able to identify their needs and how they can actually handle them in a classroom setup.

Additionally, it was realized that most students have not been exposed to the special and inclusive education course. One of the students in FGD 3 shared that;

I do not feel like I am really prepared because ever since I came here from first year until now, I never had any course or any topic concerning special education or special needs. So, it is something that is going to be difficult. It is something that I need to start teaching myself as a student teacher. I do not think I am equipped for that. Those people need people that are specifically trained for them. I feel in my class they will be left out because I wouldn't know how to help them.

Similarly, students from FGD 2 agreed that;

The knowledge I have acquired as a teacher, I think I cannot manage to handle people's special needs, because I can use my human efforts, which is empathy, but it would just be limited in some ways, whereby I'm not trained to handle those people. Thereby, they can feel like they are left behind. In short, they can be left behind with the knowledge, which I do not have on how to handle them, which is not the case. Special and inclusive education course is supposed to be offered to all of us.

The students expressed concern about their ability to handle learners with special needs in a classroom, despite possessing empathy and a humanistic approach. They acknowledge that while empathy is important, it is not enough on its own to meet the specific needs of special learners without proper training.

4.3 Deficiencies in Education courses offered in the Teacher Education Programme

In this section the findings of research question 2 have been presented. The question helped the researcher to explore the gaps in teacher education programme regarding the education courses. The themes that emerged were; adequacy of school experience for student teachers,

theory versus practice and insufficient alignment of teacher education programme with Ministry of Education prescribed core course requirements.

4.3.1 Adequacy of school experience for student teachers

Bearing in mind that school experience is an education course in the school of education, the researcher asked participants to what extent students are given enough time to practice teaching in real classes while interacting with learners in schools. It was found that the shift from six weeks to a full term is a significant improvement, addressing a critical gap in the teacher preparation process. However, while this change is laudable, questions remained about the adequacy of even one term for equipping students with the depth of experience needed to manage diverse classroom challenges effectively. In an interview with one of the lecturers, Lecturer 10 shared that;

> *Previously, our teaching practice was six weeks. It is when you are practicing that you actually begin to enhance your teaching skills. So teaching practice is now one term, and that's why it has been pushed to the final year. So teaching practice or school experience is now one full term. I still feel we can do better; a term is honestly not good enough for this school experience education course.*

Additionally, another lecturer also shared their experience saying;

> *In my department, we have a nearby school where they work under the Heads of Departments and senior teachers. And since the schools are nearby, we can even also pop in to just see what's going on. So that exposes them to a real life teaching situation but I do not see that in other departments and so we need all our student teachers to experience this education course in its totality by exposing them to frequent interactions with learners*.

The availability of nearby schools for practice under experienced teachers is an advantage that allows for structured and guided learning. However, there is need for student teachers to have more time to interact in schools and with learners. As shared by lecturer 7 who said that;

> *We cannot have a situation where students experience their teaching practice in their graduation year. At that time, students' focus is on clearing the school experience course.*

> *Through these teaching methodology courses that I alluded to, there are peer teaching sessions that do take place beginning in term one and term two but they are not appreciated by the number of interactions they have with actual learners in schools. They do not even bring the challenges they face during school experience to us because they go for their school experience once and they do it as a pre-requisite for graduation which is not right.*

Additionally, the undergraduate assistant dean poised that experiential learning is fundamental to bridging theoretical frameworks with real-world application, as shared in an interview with the Undergraduate Assistant Dean saying;

> *And so that is the exposure that they are given so that they can get the experiential learning that is necessary for them to acquire skills and ensure that they apply the theoretical knowledge that we imparted on them when they were in the university and see how they can actually apply that in the real classroom setup.*

However, the short duration of these placements may limit the ability of student teachers to fully integrate into the school culture and establish meaningful connections with learners. Additionally, exposure to real learners is critical, but without extensive mentorship, students might struggle to bridge the gap between theory and practice effectively.

4.3.2 Theory versus Practice

Still in the quest to respond to research question 2, the researcher asked students about their confidence in teaching strategies and assessment skills which they are expected to acquire in the very education courses especially the teaching methodology courses. Most of the students showed less confidence in their ability to execute their roles in line with the teaching strategies, as narrated by one of the students in FGD 3 saying;

> *About the teaching strategies, I do not think I am confident enough. I can say I am partially confident in my teaching strategies, but not very confident because when you look at it, you do not get to practice more on how you are going to actually teach. Most of it is just theoretical.*

> *The only time you get to practice peer teaching, in our case, is only twice. In addition, these two times we do peer teaching as student teachers, we do not even know how they have graded us. You just know that, okay, I passed this course, but you don't know how it was graded. The more you practice teaching people, the more you get to become confident, all of us are clearly not confident to practice teaching in actual schools.*

In the same vein a student in FGD 4 also added that;

> *Imagine next year we will be deployed to go and teach the young ones in the secondary school. We are going to stand in front of them with only 40 minutes practice time of standing in front of people and teaching. So what strategy am I going to employ? The first peer teaching was in third year and the second one was in fourth year. So it's just two times that we've practiced peer teaching. So you cannot gain much confidence from that.*

The students expressed a lack of confidence in teaching strategies due to insufficient practical experience. The participant emphasized that the majority of their teacher education is theoretical, with limited opportunities to practice teaching in real-world settings. This highlights the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical skills needed for effective teaching.

In FGD 2, students further agreed as one student noted that;

> *We just hear from our close friends doing curriculum studies that they have an assessment course and so we copy some notes from them because we will not learn that course from the look of things. So I think confidence levels personally, they are also not at par. I strongly feel like there should be more emphasis on the practical aspect of our learning here, especially the peer teaching and maybe more exposure on how to assess our learners. Like if there was a way in which while we are still students, we are still on our teacher preparation, there could be a kind of exposure that can be put across for us to be going like in schools every once in a while. So at least we just have a little bit more exposure to the environment out there.*

In addition, a number of students in FGD 4 commented about their deficiency in assessment of learners as it was expressed by one of them who seemed to have summarized other's views that;

> *I feel like I'm not that confident in my teaching strategies and assessment skills at this level. I feel like it will be more convenient if, for instance, I was to go for teaching practices in that environment and then I put into place what I know, and then that's when I will know the effects of my teaching strategies that I have in my assessment skills. That's when I will know how good they are. For now, for the fact that we haven't taken down teaching practices, I haven't done enough teaching practices, I do not know whether I have learnt enough. As for assessment I do not even know where to begin from.*

Furthermore, a student in FGD 1 suggested for more practice time saying;

> *We need more time to practice our theories as student teachers because at this point things are not clear. We do not even know whether we can assess learners because we have not yet learned how to assess them and yet we are in fourth year.*

The lack of exposure to real assessment practices creates uncertainty about their ability to assess learners effectively. This feedback highlights the gap in assessment training and suggests that more practical sessions focused on assessment could strengthen the student teachers' confidence and competence. Despite most of the participants expressing less confidence, a student in FGD 3 mentioned that;

> *I am confident about giving my assessment skills or strategies in class due to the fact that I have learned classroom management and I'm also learning assessment and measurement in the curriculum studies elective course. So in that course, I have so far learned a lot about what is the meaning of measurement and evaluation and the reasons why we must assess pupils, why we must give tests and the type of tests which are there, objective tests and all sorts of things.*

The student showed confidence in assessment skills, attributing this to the coursework in curriculum studies which is an education course offered as an elective and not to all student

teachers. This indicates a need for all student teachers to be exposed to courses such as Assessment and Measurement so as to acquire the essential skills for practical teaching.

4.3.3 Misalignment of Teacher Education Programme with Ministry of Education-prescribed Core Course requirements

In order to further unpack research question 2, the researcher solicited information from participants on the effects of offering core education courses as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. The study found that gaps in teacher preparation programs, particularly the exclusion of key courses prescribed by the Ministry of Education such as education administration and management, Information and Communication Technology, curriculum studies, and guidance and counseling, pose significant challenges. As shared in an interview with Undergraduate Assistant Dean who explained that;

> *The absence of education administration and management as a core course is regarded as a serious shortcoming. The argument presented is that every teacher, irrespective of their subject or level, is a leader and administrator in their own classroom. These skills are essential for managing school departments and academic affairs effectively.*
>
> *Without preparation in education administration and management, teachers may struggle to manage their classrooms or take on leadership roles, such as head of a department or deputy head teacher. The emphasis is on the belief that leadership and management are integral to teaching, and this training should be part of the core curriculum rather than an elective.*

When asked how education courses prepare undergraduates for the practical demands of the teacher profession, the registrar at Teaching Council of Zambia explained that;

> *In the new curriculum framework of 2023, Core foundation courses like financial education, educational administration and management, curriculum studies, information communication technology and some others are mandatory for students. These foundational courses provided by the Ministry ensure students cover most essential aspects of teaching before they are deployed.*

This reflects a holistic understanding of the teacher's role, which extends beyond just delivering lessons but to also managing classrooms and engaging in school-wide administration. This is also the case with ICT. When asked about how they think the exclusion of Information Communication Technology as a core education course affects the preparedness of future teachers, during interviews with deputy director, registrar and assistant dean it was revealed as the Dean mentioned that;

> *The lack of ICT as a core course is seen as detrimental to teacher preparedness, particularly as the digital world is rapidly evolving. The shortage of qualified teachers to teach ICT, is a major challenge. However, the argument is that the evolving nature of curricula should include ICT as a mandatory part of teacher preparation, ensuring that every future teacher is equipped with technological competencies,* stated the deputy director.

And the Assistant Dean added that;

> *There is a strong call to make ICT a mandatory course because every teaching environment, irrespective of location or resources, increasingly relies on technological proficiency*.

Additionally, the Registrar also mentioned the following in responding to the same question;

> *There are big implications now because we have gotten into the digital era. The digital era is requiring that every teacher must have minimum digital literacy courses. In recent research that was done by the Teaching Council of Zambia this year in Livingstone on teachers with ICT, it was discovered that 75% of the teachers had low or lack of digital literacy. How that translates, for example, in the primary school sector, ICT is a compulsory subject. So if this teacher did it as an elective, the other one has graduated without digital literacy, how does he get it to the primary school sector and teach a subject which he was not exposed to because ICT is compulsory at that level.*

The exclusion of ICT from core teacher preparation courses is a significant concern in an era where technology plays a pivotal role in education. Teachers who are not proficient in ICT

may struggle to integrate technology into their lessons, limiting students' exposure to essential digital literacy skills. Additionally, the deputy director mentioned another significant course to teacher education when he mentioned that;

> *Curriculum studies, particularly in terms of teaching strategies, assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation, is described as fundamental for teacher education. The concern raised is that when this course is offered as an elective, it leaves a gap in the preparation of teachers.*

> *Curriculum knowledge is especially crucial for teachers who are tasked with implementing and assessing curriculum in classrooms, even if they are not directly involved in curriculum design. If teachers lack this knowledge, they may find it difficult to implement curriculum reforms or assess educational outcomes effectively.*

The Assistant Dean further added that;

> *The argument is that curriculum studies should either be a core component of teacher education or integrated across other relevant educational courses*.

The importance of curriculum studies cannot be overstated, as it provides teachers with the necessary understanding to effectively engage with, deliver, and adapt curriculum content. While it is true that teachers may not always be involved in curriculum evaluation or reform, they are the key players in curriculum implementation, making knowledge in this area essential for their teaching practices.

Further, the researcher in separate interviews participants mentioned the necessity of acquiring guidance and counselling as well as special and inclusive education skills. It was found that while some schools may have dedicated guidance and counseling departments, teachers often find themselves at the forefront of addressing students' emotional and behavioral issues. Teachers do not also pick the classes they teach and they may find themselves tasked to handle learners with special learners as shared by Assistant Dean that;

> *The absence of guidance and counseling skills in teacher education is seen as a significant shortcoming in preparing teachers for the diverse needs of*

students. Teachers are expected to handle various behavioral and emotional issues that arise in the classroom, yet without formal preparation in guidance and counseling, they may lack the tools to provide adequate support.

This view was also supported by the Deputy Director who explained that;

Teachers often play the role of counselor, informally dealing with issues such as delinquency and mental health. The argument here is that providing basic knowledge and skills in guidance and counseling would better equip teachers to manage these challenges and contribute to the overall development of their students.

When asked about the necessity of special and inclusive education skills, the registrar noted that;

As a teacher, we are not going to choose a class to say, when I go to this school, I will not have any child who doesn't have a special need. Definitely when you are sent to a school, it's either maybe you have a learner who is hard of hearing, you have a learner who is physically impaired, you have a learner who is visually impaired, and you should be prepared. One should be prepared in the special and inclusive education in this modern era.

The Deputy Director also explained that;

That is another area we also look at. Ours is to ensure that no child is left behind. No matter how that child is, whether disabled or for the lack of a better term, a normal child. Those children should be regarded as the same. There shouldn't be any distinction between the so-called disabled and the normal child. Every child should be regarded as the same but it takes a teacher who is prepared in special and inclusive education to know that. That course is a foundational need for all learner.

The Assistant Dean also acknowledged that;

> *We acknowledge the current gap that we have in special and inclusive education and with the imminent instruction from the Ministry to make it a foundation course, we are pushing to review our curriculum and make it a core course in the teacher education programme, we are guilty on this one.*

Thus, the recommendation to make guidance and counseling as well as special and inclusive education as compulsory education courses of teacher preparation programs is crucial because it would provide teachers with foundational knowledge and tools to identify, support, and refer students who are facing challenges.

4.4 Education courses to be added as core courses to the Teacher Education programme

Research question 3 helped the research to collect information on critical knowledge areas of education that participants thought should be added to teacher preparation as a way of making it more robust and help to prepare teachers more holistically. In the responses it was interesting to note that most of the education courses that participants have already mentioned came back as crucial to the preparation of the teacher. Courses such as Educational Administration and Management, Guidance and Counselling, Curriculum Studies, ICT and Special and Inclusive Education.

4.4.1 The Need for Education Administration and Management, Guidance and Counselling and Curriculum Studies courses

The researcher asked on what knowledge areas the participants thought need a compulsory status to better prepare student teachers. The need for education administration and management, guidance and counselling as well as curriculum studies in preparing student teachers to effectively navigate the complexities of the educational system was stressed by various participants. In line with this, Lecturer 5 asserted that;

> *I think the education courses in terms of education administration and management and the aspect of guidance and counselling should be incorporated in all teaching methodology because it can fit well in the teaching methodology courses. In one way or another they will probably manage a department or school or be in a position to help a learner overcome depression, they must be prepared in such courses in order to handle those roles.*

The Deputy Director also emphasized that;

> *A teacher is a substitute parent and at one point or the other, they will have to counsel a learner who may be going through a mental health issue or coming from a broken home, these are realities of our profession. This is why we saw it fit as a ministry to make guidance and counselling a core foundation course. Curriculum studies too needs no introduction because what they do in those schools is curriculum implementation and so we cannot afford to neglect certain courses in teacher education programmes.*

This was further added by the Assistant Dean who explained that;

> *It's only right that we adhere to the concerns of the ministry, we are not doing our students any good by denying them what their employers are demanding. I will propose the integration of Educational administration and management, Curriculum studies, Guidance and counselling and others recommended by the ministry either as stand-alone courses or to be incorporated in other core courses taken by everyone.*

In FGD 3 and 4, students agreed as one of them explained that;

> *I think education administration and management should be a compulsory course so that we may get to learn more on how to manage different aspects in education. And curriculum studies as well because it keeps on changing and we are key players in implementing it.*

In addition, an interview with Registrar revealed that;

> *Curriculum studies is also a good education course for students who are being prepared as teachers, they should understand the theories of curriculum development and what a curriculum is because all those aspects are covered in curriculum studies. You cannot be a teacher and fail to define or present the various types of curriculum.*

Participants agreed that curriculum studies as an education course provides student teachers with knowledge about how curricula are developed, including their structure, goals, and how

they evolve over time. By understanding these elements, teachers can effectively implement and possibly influence the design of the curriculum.

4.4.2 The Need for ICT Integration

The quest to respond to research question 3 continued with the researcher still enquiring on the knowledge areas that participants think were to be included as core education courses in the teacher education programme. Lecturer 9 pointed out that;

> *Because we are in the era where technology has become a very crucial thing, ICT should be a compulsory education course for all students. Maybe ICT should be a first-year course where student teachers are introduced to a computer and all these other aspects that are supposed to be covered in ICT. So, ICT should be incorporated because this is what is happening out there.*

Moreover, the Registrar also explained that;

> *Nowadays, we have pupils in schools who are ever on gadgets. They are even better than teachers and that becomes unfortunate. And now imagine this teacher who goes in this classroom where we have this class of learners who are already advanced in technology. ICT should be a core education course at every teacher preparation institution.*

In FGD 1, a student also added that;

> *there are two courses which every student teacher has to take. The first one is ICT. Every teacher has to have knowledge in ICT because looking at the rapid development of technology, so it is prudent for every teacher to have such skills and knowledge in ICT because technology is taking over.*

In the same vein lecturers 1, 6 and 10 shared a similar thought saying that;

> *Every student teacher should understand ICT basics. Because we are living in a digital world where everything keeps on changing. So it is important for every student teacher to do ICT basics. At least even if it is basics, they have some computer skills.*

Basic ICT skills are no longer optional for teachers. Understanding how to navigate and utilize digital tools is fundamental for modern teaching practices.

4.4.3 The Need for Special and Inclusive Education course

Participants also brought out the need to have special and inclusive education as a mandatory course for all student teachers and in line with this discovery, in an interview with Deputy Director he actually mentioned that;

> *So, the expectation is that after this research you are conducting coupled with recommendations from the Ministry of Education, scholars in tertiary institutions should acknowledge the significance of the special and inclusive education course to all our student teachers. We expect such teachers to take care of such needs in our school environment.*

Additionally, another interview with lecturer 4 emphasized on the need to make special education compulsory, as the lecturer narrated that;

> *Special education as an education course should be taken by every student teacher because these student teachers might find themselves in an inclusive classroom. So, if they don't have special education skills, it will be very difficult for them to attend to the same children.*
>
> *It is actually very surprising to know that research is being conducted over the inclusion of special and inclusive education course in the 21st century. I expected us as lecturers to have recognized the significance of this course and make it a core course.*

From the participants view point it can be deduced that making special and inclusive education course compulsory would ensure that all teachers, regardless of their subject focus, are trained to identify and support students with diverse needs. This would promote a more inclusive educational environment and ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

Similarly, in all the FGDs with students, special and inclusive education was further recommended as a course that needs to be made compulsory amongst all the student-teachers. One of the students shared that;

I think I recommend to learn more on how to handle inclusive classes especially that it should be compulsory to all student teachers. I am saying so because I have friends who are not exposed to this knowledge and I feel like they are missing out on how to handle such learners.

I don't think I am competent or I possess the knowledge to handle inclusive classes due to the fact that I did a course in introductory to special education in my second year, but it was just an introductory. So we just learned about where special education started in Zambia, who was involved. For example, I don't know sign language, I don't know how to use tactile language, even how to use a braille. But I did that course in special education but in that inclusive class you may have a person who is deaf, we really need that course as student teachers, it should be a core course.

Inclusive classrooms bring together students with varying abilities and learning styles. Teachers who are not prepared in inclusive practices may find it challenging to manage such diversity. Courses should cover practical skills like sign language, braille, and other communication methods for students with specific disabilities. This will ensure that teachers are fully capable of managing and supporting diverse learners.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, the research findings are presented according to the themes that emerged from the research questions and objectives. The results, derived from responses to the three research questions, strongly indicate that teacher preparation at a university in Lusaka was insufficient. Key education courses such as Education Administration and Management, Special and Inclusive Education, Information Communication Technology, and Curriculum Studies, which are required by the Ministry of Education for all student teachers, were instead being offered as electives. In the findings it is so clear that there is agreement throughout all the findings in relation to the three research questions that same issue keep on coming back in the analysis of the data which was collected. This is a strong indication that there is a need to focus and pay attention to the issues that have been presented in this chapter. In the next chapter, discussions of the findings of this study are done.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Overview

This chapter is a discussion of the findings of the teacher education programme at a university in Lusaka province, with a primary focus on education courses that were offered. The discussion is specifically based on the main findings presented in chapter four of this study, as well as relating them to the theoretical framework which guided this study and other related literature.

5.1 Views of lecturers and students about teacher education courses

The findings from the study reveal significant insights into the perspectives of lecturers and students on teacher education courses. Both lecturers and students recognized the need for practical experience in teacher education programs. Lecturers, as highlighted in the findings, expressed concern about the limited emphasis on practical training, estimating that practical skills constituted less than 10% of teacher preparation. Students similarly emphasized the importance of hands-on learning and mentorship to better prepare them for real-world teaching environments. However, differences emerged as lecturers prioritize the integration of theoretical components such as curriculum studies and other core education courses to ensure student teachers grasp essential educational principles. In contrast, students often prioritize practical application over theory, underscoring the need for a balanced approach.

The findings of this study align with existing literature, both globally and regionally, emphasizing the need for teacher education programs to better align with occupational demands in the teaching profession. For instance, Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) and Robinson and Leonard (2010) identified gaps in preparing teachers for real-world teaching, underscoring the need for practical, hands-on experiences and alignment with employer and community expectations. Similarly, regional studies, such as those by Ndaruhutse (2015) and Mbaru (2017), highlighted discrepancies in African teacher education programs, particularly in aligning curricula with national standards and the practical needs of the classroom. However, this study further revealed issues in the teacher education program that was studied, particularly in curriculum review processes due to the lack of regular updates.

The emphasis on ICT in Education reflects students' recognition of the growing importance of technology in modern teaching. They noted the need for digital literacy to enhance lesson delivery and stay competitive in a globalized education sector. Literature echoes this,

highlighting the transformative role of ICT in improving educational outcomes (Kozma, 2005). Human capital theory suggests that technological skills are critical in the knowledge economy, where digital proficiency significantly enhances an individual's employability and productivity (Autor, Levy, & Murnane, 2003). Investment in ICT training for teachers ensures that they can adapt to technological advancements, thereby increasing their value as educators.

Students and lecturers highlighted the importance of Education Administration and Management in preparing teachers for leadership roles. The course was seen as essential for understanding school hierarchies, decision-making processes, and effective management practices. This aligns with literature that emphasizes the need for educational leaders to possess management skills for effective school administration (Bush, 2008). From a human capital theory perspective, this course equips teachers with managerial competencies that enhance their productivity and ability to contribute to institutional success. Schultz (1961) argued that investment in education, particularly in management training, increases the value of human capital, enabling individuals to perform complex roles more effectively.

The findings underscored the significance of Curriculum Studies in helping teachers align educational content with societal needs. Students and lecturers recognized the curriculum as a bridge between societal realities and classroom teaching. Literature supports this view, emphasizing that a well-designed curriculum reflects societal values and prepares learners for real-world challenges (Tyler, 1949). The human capital theory further reinforces this by suggesting that curricula tailored to societal demands enhance the relevance and utility of education, fostering economic growth and social cohesion. Becker (1993) posited that education that reflects societal needs contributes to the development of skills directly applicable to the labor market.

Students had also stressed the need for Guidance and Counselling as a core course, showing its role in addressing learners' emotional, social, and academic challenges. This perspective aligns with research emphasizing the importance of counseling in fostering student well-being and academic success (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). Through the lens of human capital theory, equipping teachers with counseling skills represents an investment in human resources that enhances the overall quality of education. Teachers who can provide holistic support contribute to the development of well-rounded individuals, which is vital for societal and economic advancement.

Special and inclusive education is another critical area in teacher education programs (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The findings revealed a strong demand for Special and Inclusive Education to prepare teachers for addressing the needs of diverse learners. Lecturers explained the importance of equipping student teachers with the skills to address the needs of diverse learners, emphasizing the inclusion of special education courses in the curriculum (Mwape & Banda, 2015). However, findings showed that students often felt unprepared to handle learners with special needs due to inadequate exposure to this area during their teacher preparation. The human capital theory emphasizes the value of inclusivity in maximizing societal potential. Equipping teachers with the skills to support all learners ensures that no talent is wasted, contributing to a more equitable and productive society.

Students and lecturers advocated for the inclusion of Financial Education as an integrated course to promote financial literacy and responsible decision-making. This aligns with studies that revealed the importance of financial education in fostering economic stability and personal well-being (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). From a human capital perspective, financial literacy is an essential skill that enhances individuals' capacity to manage resources effectively, contributing to personal and societal economic development. Teachers with financial knowledge are better equipped to model and impart these skills to their students.

The human capital theory, which emphasizes the importance of education as an investment to enhance productivity, provides a useful lens for understanding these findings. Lecturers' emphasis on theoretical knowledge aligns with the theory's assertion that equipping teachers with foundational principles increases their value in the workforce (Becker & Woessmann, 2011). The findings demonstrate that the prescribed teacher education courses are highly significant for preparing teachers to meet diverse educational demands. The alignment of these courses with human capital theory underscores their role in enhancing teachers' competencies, thereby contributing to individual, institutional and societal development. This discussion reinforces the need for continued investment in teacher education to address emerging challenges and ensure the preparation of well-rounded teachers.

5.2 Gaps in education courses offered in the teacher education programme

Findings revealed that inadequate practical exposure during teaching practice is a significant gap. Students expressed a lack of confidence in their teaching strategies and assessment skills due to limited opportunities for peer teaching and real-life classroom experience. Literature

supports this concern, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning in teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Practical exposure enables the application of theoretical knowledge, which is critical for building confidence and competence in teaching. From a human capital theory perspective, limited practical training and education hinders the development of essential teaching skills, reducing the value of the teacher as a productive asset in the education system. Becker (1993) asserted that hands-on training enhances skill acquisition, which directly impacts professional performance and societal contributions.

Findings from lecturers revealed significant behavioral and ethical gaps in teacher education, such as inappropriate dressing and poor work habits among student teachers. These gaps show the insufficiency of current core education courses in instilling professional values. Literature emphasizes that teacher education must go beyond pedagogy to include the development of professional ethics and behavior (Shulman, 1987). Schultz (1961) argued that education systems should not only enhance technical skills but also foster behaviors and values essential for professional success.

Furthermore, students expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to assess learners, citing insufficient preparation in assessment strategies. This gap is exacerbated by the elective status of courses like Assessment and Measurement, which are not accessible to all student teachers. Literature shows the importance of assessment preparation in equipping teachers to evaluate and improve student learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Teachers who can accurately measure and address student performance contribute more effectively to the development of human capital in society.

Lecturers noted that some education courses, such as ICT, have not been updated in line with emerging trends and Ministry of Education guidelines. Regular curriculum reviews are essential to ensure relevance and alignment with current educational practices (Fullan, 2007). Outdated curricula limit the ability of student teachers to meet the demands of modern classrooms, reducing their value as contributors to the knowledge economy. Schultz (1961) argued that education must evolve to address societal and technological changes to maximize its impact.

The findings reveal that key education courses prescribed in the Zambia Education Curriculum Framework by the Ministry of Education such as Curriculum Studies, Education Administration and Management, Information and Communication Technology, Special and

Inclusive education, Financial education and Guidance and Counselling are offered as electives rather than core courses. This limits the preparedness of student teachers to address diverse classroom needs. Research shows that education courses are essential for developing well-rounded teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006). According to participants, comprehensive teacher preparation programs that include these foundational courses enhance the quality of education and contribute to the development of a skilled workforce. By neglecting these areas, teacher education programs fail to fully capitalize on the potential of their graduates.

Key informants (Assistant Dean, Registrar, Deputy Director) and lecturers identified gaps in foundational courses such as Education Administration and Management, ICT, and Curriculum Studies, which are often offered as electives rather than core courses. The absence of these courses in the core curriculum limits teachers' preparedness for leadership roles, digital literacy, and curriculum implementation. Research has shown that these skills are integral to effective teaching and school management (Kozma, 2005). The human capital theory underscores the need for foundational skills to maximize productivity. Schultz (1961) argued that education systems should focus on equipping individuals with essential competencies that enhance their economic and social value. The lack of mandatory foundational courses reduces the effectiveness of teacher education programs in fulfilling this role.

Additionally, the absence of formal training and education in Guidance and Counseling was identified as a critical shortcoming. Teachers are expected to address diverse behavioral and emotional needs, yet many lack the necessary skills. Literature emphasizes the importance of counseling training in fostering a supportive learning environment (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). In human capital terms, this gap represents a missed opportunity to develop teachers as holistic educators who contribute to the emotional and social well-being of learners. By neglecting this area, the education system fails to fully capitalize on teachers' potential to nurture well-rounded learners who are in fact future leaders.

Special and Inclusive Education remains underemphasized in the curriculum, leaving teachers ill-prepared to support learners with diverse needs. Students and lecturers acknowledged this gap, aligning with literature that calls for inclusive training to address equity in education (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Human capital theory depicts inclusivity as a driver of societal progress. Equipping teachers with skills to support all learners ensures that no individual is left behind, maximizing societal potential and economic growth.

The findings indicate a lack of ICT in education, despite its critical role in modern teaching. With 75% of teachers in Zambia reported to have a low digital literacy, this gap poses significant challenges in integrating technology into education. Research underscores the transformative potential of ICT in improving educational outcomes (Kozma, 2005). Human capital theory positions digital literacy as a key competency in the knowledge economy. Investing in ICT training enhances teachers' productivity and adaptability, ensuring they can meet the demands of a rapidly evolving digital landscape (Autor, Levy, & Murnane, 2003).

A recurring theme in the findings is the disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Students and lecturers emphasized the need for more frequent interactions with real classroom settings to bridge this gap. Darling-Hammond (2006) argued that integrating theory with practice is essential for effective teacher preparation. According to the human capital theory, practical application reinforces theoretical learning, enhancing the quality of human resources. Teachers who can seamlessly apply theory in practice are better equipped to contribute to student success and societal development.

The findings show critical gaps in teacher education courses, particularly in practical exposure, foundational skills, and inclusivity. These gaps align with literature and underscore the importance of addressing them to enhance teacher preparedness. From a human capital theory perspective, investing in comprehensive teacher training and education programs is essential to maximize the value of teachers as contributors to educational and societal progress. Addressing these gaps will ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills and confidence needed to meet the demands of modern education.

5.3 Education courses to be added as core courses to the teacher education programme

The findings from the study reveal a convergence of opinions among participants that the recommendation to include Educational Administration and Management as a core course reflects the recognition of teachers' roles as leaders and administrators. This course is essential for equipping teachers with skills to manage classrooms, departments, and schools effectively. Literature points to the importance of management training in teacher preparation, noting that leadership is integral to fostering a conducive learning environment (Bush, 2008). From a human capital theory perspective, this course represents an investment in teachers' managerial competencies, enhancing their ability to contribute to institutional success. Schultz (1961)

argued that equipping individuals with leadership and administrative skills increases their productivity and value in the workforce.

In addition, ICT is consistently recommended as a mandatory course by participants, given the increasing reliance on technology in education. Participants emphasized the need for digital literacy, demonstrating its importance for modern classrooms where students are often more technologically advanced than their teachers. Literature supports this, asserting that ICT integration in teacher education enhances teaching and prepares teachers for the digital era (Kozma, 2005). Becker (1993) emphasized that technological competencies increase employability and productivity, making ICT education and training a vital component of teacher preparation programs.

On the other hand, the inclusion of Curriculum Studies as a core course is deemed crucial for preparing teachers to implement, assess, and adapt curricula effectively. Participants revealed the need for teachers to understand curriculum theories and practices, as these are foundational to their roles. Research corroborates this, emphasizing that curriculum studies equip teachers with the tools to navigate educational reforms and deliver relevant content (Tyler, 1949). This aligns with Schultz's (1961) assertion that education tailored to real-world demands maximizes human capital.

The recommendation to make Special and Inclusive Education a core course reflects the growing emphasis on equity and diversity in education. Participants stressed the importance of preparing teachers to support learners with diverse needs, including those with disabilities. Literature showed the necessity of inclusive education training in promoting equal opportunities for all students (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Human capital theory reinforces this by emphasizing inclusivity as a means to maximize societal potential. Equipping teachers with the skills to address diverse learner needs ensures that no talent is wasted, contributing to economic and social progress.

The recommendation to integrate Guidance and Counselling into the teacher education programme reflects the multifaceted role of teachers as mentors and support systems for learners. Participants noted that teachers often act as substitute parents, addressing learners' emotional and behavioral challenges. Research underscores the importance of counseling training in fostering a supportive learning environment (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). In human capital terms, this course enhances teachers' ability to nurture well-rounded students,

contributing to societal well-being. By equipping teachers with counseling skills, education systems invest in human resources that promote holistic development.

The recommendations for core courses; Education Administration and Management, ICT, Curriculum Studies, Special and Inclusive Education, and Guidance and Counselling align with both literature and human capital theory. These courses address critical gaps in teacher preparation, ensuring that educators are equipped to meet the demands of modern education. From a human capital perspective, integrating these courses represents a strategic investment in the professional growth of teachers, enhancing their ability to contribute to individual, institutional, and societal success.

5.4 Summary

This discussion revealed significant gaps in teacher education programs, including insufficient practical teaching experiences, and inadequate preparation in ICT, education administration and management, curriculum studies, special education, and guidance and counseling. Both lecturers and students recognize the need for a more balanced approach that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical application. The literature and Human Capital Theory reinforce the importance of equipping future teachers with the skills and competencies needed to meet occupational demands and societal expectations. Despite some alignment between the findings and theoretical frameworks, systemic challenges, such as limited funding and resource constraints, hinder the full realization of these goals. Addressing these gaps requires systemic reforms, including regular curriculum reviews, increased practical training opportunities, and making recommended education courses mandatory.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Overview

In this chapter, a summary of the main research findings has been presented. Furthermore, conclusions and recommendations of the study have been made and some suggestions on areas for future research have been given as well. The focus of this study was to examine the teacher education programme at a university in Lusaka province, Zambia with a primary focus on education courses that were offered.

6.1 Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal significant gaps in the teacher education program that undermine the preparedness of student teachers to meet the demands of modern classrooms. One of the most critical gaps identified is the lack of adequate practical exposure during teaching practice. It can be concluded that this insufficiency limits student teachers' confidence and ability to apply theoretical knowledge effectively in actual classroom settings. This study's theory suggests that the more relevant preparation individuals receive, the greater their productivity in their professional roles. The insufficiency of practical experience limits student teachers' ability to apply theoretical knowledge effectively, thereby reducing their human capital development and making them less equipped for real classroom environments. Another conclusion is that while the current teaching practice duration has been extended to a full term, school experience remains inadequate for fostering the necessary competency and experience as a student.

Another notable conclusion is that insufficient training and education in assessment strategies may hinder student teachers' ability to evaluate and enhance student learning outcomes. This gap is exacerbated by the elective status of education courses like Assessment and Measurement, which restricts access to essential skills for many student teachers. Although student teachers may come across a topic on assessment in teaching methodology, what they do in one topic is not enough to prepare them for this important aspect of facilitating teaching and learning.

Additionally, the elective status of education courses such as Education Administration and Management, ICT, Curriculum Studies, Special and Inclusive Education, and Guidance and Counselling which are prescribed by the Ministry of Education as core teacher education courses further limits teacher preparedness. Human capital theory posits that the quality of

education and training directly affects workforce efficiency. The lack of emphasis on these courses diminishes the ability of teachers to adapt to technological advancements, manage schools effectively, and cater to the diverse needs of learners. This, in turn, reduces the overall effectiveness of teacher education programs and weakens the human capital potential within the education sector. In conclusion, these education courses are vital for equipping future teachers with the knowledge and skills to address diverse classroom needs, manage school environments and adapt to technological advancements. The lack of emphasis on these areas reduces the effectiveness of teacher education programs.

In addition, a conclusion was drawn that the inclusion of Curriculum Studies as a core course is deemed crucial for preparing teachers to implement, assess and adapt curricula effectively. There is need for teachers to understand curriculum theories and practices, as these are critical to their roles as curriculum implementers.

Further, the absence of mandatory teacher preparation in Guidance and Counselling emerged as another critical shortcoming. It can be concluded that teachers often act as substitute parents, addressing learners' emotional and behavioral challenges, yet many lack the necessary counseling skills. Similarly, a conclusion was drawn that the limited focus on Special and Inclusive Education leaves teachers ill-prepared to support learners with diverse needs, undermining efforts to promote equity and inclusivity in education.

6.2 Recommendations

In line with the conclusions drawn based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Institutions of higher learning that prepare teachers through the teacher education programmes should allow for frequency of teaching practice to provide more opportunities for student teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in classroom settings. Teaching practice should be done in such a way that student teachers come back to their respective institutions after teaching practice to discuss challenges faced during the school experience as opposed to letting it take place after their final year of study just as a pre-requisite to graduation.
2. Additionally, the university that was studies in this research should elevate education courses such as Education Administration and Management, Information and Communication Technology, Curriculum Studies, Special and Inclusive Education,

and Guidance and Counselling to mandatory core courses for all student teachers as prescribed by the Ministry of Education curriculum framework in the teacher education section. Therefore, student teachers need to be exposed to these education courses so as to attain holistic teacher preparation.

3. The Teaching Council of Zambia should develop continuing professional development programmes focused on enhancing teaching strategies, inclusive education, educational administration and management and Information and Communication Technology skills for practicing teachers so as to provide a chance to those teachers who did not study these important disciplines in college or university.
4. The Ministry of Education should collaborate with higher learning institutions to review and align teacher education curricula with modern teaching needs and global educational trends.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

i. This study was only carried out at a selected university in Lusaka, Zambia. There is need to conduct similar studies in other teacher preparation institutions not covered in this study.

ii. A study may be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of ICT integration in teacher education programs in Zambia.

iii. Another study may be done to explore the role of school experience duration and structure on the professional readiness of student teachers in Zambia

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Lecturers

My name is Sydney Peunja, and I am a Master of Education student in Curriculum Studies at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study on the teacher education program at a university in Lusaka Province, with a specific focus on education courses. I have chosen to speak with you because of your extensive knowledge on this subject. I kindly request that you share your views and experiences related to my research. Please be assured that all the information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study. In addition to taking notes, I would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation to ensure that I capture all important points that will you share with me.

Section 1: **Bio Data**

1. Which department are you affiliated with?
2. Can you describe the key focus areas of your department?
3. What courses do you teach in the School of Education?

Section 2: **Views of Lecturers about teacher education courses**

1. What is your overall perception of the teacher education programs offered at this university in relation to the quality of students' readiness to become educationists?
2. In your opinion, are the core education courses offered comprehensive enough to cover all necessary aspects of teacher education? Please elaborate.
3. Do you think the teacher education curriculum at this University is up-to-date with current educational trends and practices from the education courses point of view? Why or why not?

Section 3: **Gaps in education courses offered in the teacher education programme**

4. Which course is offered that prepares student teachers in co-curriculum activities while they are in school?
5. If you do not have any course for co-curriculum activities, how else are you preparing students teaching in readiness for helping learners in schools take part in co-curricular activities?

6. Despite the Ministry of Education prescribing Information Communication Technology as a foundation course for teacher preparation, Student teachers at this University at times graduate without taking Information Communication Technology as an education course, what are your thoughts over its status as an elective course?
7. What do you think is the impact of some pre-service teachers graduating without being equipped with guidance and counselling skills?
8. What are your thoughts on the relevance of curriculum teaching strategies and assessment as an education course for teacher preparation?
9. Given the relevance you have pointed out, why do you think Curriculum studies is not a core course?
10. Do you think student teachers receive adequate lesson preparation skills, professional understanding of being a teacher, classroom management skills and practice? Why or why not?
11. To what extent are your students given enough time to practice teaching in real classes and interacting with learners in schools?
12. Stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and other Non-Governmental Organizations such as VVOB complain about new teachers from universities not knowing how to prepare lessons, where is the problem in the this area in your programme?

Section 4: **Recommendation of key education courses to be added as core courses to the teacher education programme**

13. What key education courses do you think should be taken by every student teacher?
14. Why are these education courses key for teacher preparation?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

APPENDIX II: Focus Group Discussion for Students

My name is Sydney Peunja, and I am a Master of Education student in Curriculum Studies at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study on the teacher education program at a university in Lusaka Province, with a specific focus on education courses. I have chosen to discuss with you because of you valid opinions on the adequacy of education courses in the teacher education programme. I kindly request that you share your views and experiences related to my research. Please be assured that all the information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study. In addition to taking notes, I would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation to ensure that I capture all important points you share.

Section 1**: Bio Data**

1. What year of study are you in?
2. What is your subject major and minor?
3. Which courses have you found most/least beneficial?

Section 2: **Views of students about teacher education courses**

1. What do you think is the importance of education administration and management as well as Curriculum Studies as education courses in your future teaching career? Given their importance, are you satisfied that it is offered as an elective education course?
2. Are you confident about your teaching strategies and assessment skills? If yes, provide courses where you learnt these skills.
3. What value do you see in guidance and counselling as a course for your provision of learner support and professional development? Can u provide courses where you learnt this skill?
4. What are your thoughts on the role of Information Communication Technology as an education course in your future teaching career? Do you then think it should be a core or an elective course?
5. Do you think financial education as an education course is necessary for your preparation as a teacher? Why or Why not?

6. Can you help learners in co-curricular activities based on what you have learnt in university? If yes, provide courses and activities that you have done in the programme towards this cause.
7. How prepared do you feel to handle special and inclusive education needs in your future classrooms? Give reasons Why based on the courses you have taken.

Section Four: **Recommendation of what education courses should be added as core courses to the teacher education programme**

8. What key education courses do you feel should be taken by every student teacher?
9. How do you think these additions would benefit future teachers?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

APPENDIX III: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Dean-School of Education

My name is Sydney Peunja, and I am a Master of Education in Curriculum Studies student at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study on the teacher education program at a university in Lusaka Province, with a specific focus on education courses. I have chosen to speak with you because of your extensive knowledge on this subject. I kindly request that you share your views and experiences related to my research. Please be assured that all the information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study. In addition to taking notes, I would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation to ensure that I capture all important points you share.

Section 1: **Bio Data**

1. What are your primary responsibilities in this role?

Section 2: **Gaps in education courses offered in the teacher education programme**

1. How would you describe the current state of core and elective education courses offered in this school at this university?
2. How well-prepared do you believe graduates of the teacher education programs are for real-world teaching challenges?
5. What are some of the main challenges you face in maintaining the relevance of the education courses?
6. To what extent are the lecturers in teaching methodology and education courses preparing student teachers in the use of Information Communication Technology in teaching?
7. Why then is information communication technology not offered as a core course despite its growing importance in education?
8. What are your thoughts on the relevance of curriculum strategies and assessment as an education course for teacher preparation?
9. Given the relevance you have pointed out, why do you think Curriculum studies is not a core course in the teacher education programme at this University?
10. What steps can be taken to elevate these elective courses to core status?

Section 3: **Recommendation of education courses to be added as core courses to the teacher education programme**

11. Are there any specific education courses that you feel are particularly strong or weak in preparing future teachers?
12. What steps are being taken to address the weak areas?
13. The current argument in your school and university is that students should do only about five or four courses per semester. Given the importance of most of the education courses that your students do not do, how can we ensure that they do them while they are on the programme?
14. What key education courses do you think should be taken by every student teacher?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

APPENDIX IV: Semi-Structured Interview Guide Assistant Dean in Charge of Undergraduates-School of Education

My name is Sydney Peunja, and I am a Master of Education in Curriculum Studies student at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study on the teacher education program at a university in Lusaka Province, with a specific focus on education courses. I have chosen to speak with you because of your extensive knowledge on this subject. I kindly request that you share your views and experiences related to my research. Please be assured that all the information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study. In addition to taking notes, I would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation to ensure that I capture all important points you share.

Section 1: **Bio Data**

1. What are your primary responsibilities in this role?

Section 2: Objective One

1. What is your overall perception of the teacher education programs offered at this university in relation to the quality of students' readiness to become educationists?
2. In your opinion, are the core education courses offered comprehensive enough to cover all necessary aspects of teacher education? Please elaborate.
3. Do you think the teacher education curriculum at this University is up-to-date with current educational trends and practices from the education courses point of view? Why or why not?

Section 3: **Gaps in education courses offered in the teacher education programme**

1. How do education courses prepare undergraduates for the practical demands of the teaching profession?
2. Information Communication Technology skills are one of the practical demands of the teaching profession according to the Ministry of Education, what is the significance of ICT as an education course for student teachers?
3. Why then is Information Communication Technology categorized as an elective in the undergraduate teacher education program?
4. What is your perspective on the importance of education administration and management as a course in the undergraduate program?

5. Given the significance of education administration and management in teacher preparation you have pointed out, how do you ensure students are practically prepared to handle administrative roles if the course is offered as an elective?
6. What challenges do you face in ensuring that key education courses prescribed by the Ministry of Education are taken by every student teacher?
7. How do you equip student teachers with the value of curriculum instruction strategies and assessment?
8. What is your view on the necessity of financial education as an education course for student teachers?
9. How do you address the importance of special and inclusive education course to student teachers?
10. What is the importance of guidance and counselling as an education course given that some student teachers graduate without taking the course?
11. Do you prepare student teachers to spearhead Co-Curricular activities? Which courses are there to prepare them for these activities?
12. What resources or support would be necessary to implement these elective education courses as core components in the teacher education programme?

Section 3: **Recommendation on education courses to be added as core courses to the teacher education programme**

1. In your view, how effective are the current education courses in equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge?
2. What key education courses do you feel should be taken by every student teacher?
3. The current argument in your school and university is that students should do only about five or four courses per semester. Given the importance of most of the education courses that your students do not do, how can we ensure that they do them while they are on the programme?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

APPENDIX V: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Registrar-Teaching Council of Zambia

My name is Sydney Peunja, and I am a Master of Education in Curriculum Studies student at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study on the teacher education program at a university in Lusaka Province, with a specific focus on education courses. I have chosen to speak with you because of your extensive knowledge on this subject. I kindly request that you share your views and experiences related to my research. Please be assured that all the information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study. In addition to taking notes, I would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation to ensure that I capture all important points you share.

Section 1: **Bio Data**

1. What are your main responsibilities and duties?

Section 2: **Gaps in education courses offered in the teacher education programme**

1. How do education foundation courses prepare undergraduates for the practical demands of the teaching profession?
2. How does the Teaching Council view the importance of education administration and management as an education course in teacher education?
3. What are the implications of Information Communication Technology being offered as an elective rather than a core course to student teachers?
4. Do you think every student teacher should learn teaching strategies and assessment as an education course? Why?
5. What is your perspective on the necessity of financial education as an education course for student teachers?
6. Is it necessary that every pre-service teacher should graduate with special and inclusive education skills for new teachers? Please elaborate.
7. How can the Teaching Council support teacher preparation institutions in making sure student teachers are fully prepared for the practical demands of the teaching profession?

Section 3: **Recommendation on education courses to be added as core courses to the teacher education programme**

1. What knowledge areas do you think need more focus to better prepare pre-service teachers?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

APPENDIX VI: Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Deputy Director in Charge of Teacher Education and Specialised Services

My name is Sydney Peunja, and I am a Master of Education in Curriculum Studies student at the University of Zambia. I am conducting a study on the teacher education program at a university in Lusaka Province, with a specific focus on education courses. I have chosen to speak with you because of your extensive knowledge on this subject. I kindly request that you share your views and experiences related to my research. Please be assured that all the information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study. In addition to taking notes, I would like to ask for your permission to record our conversation to ensure that I capture all important points you share.

Section 1: **Bio Data**

1. What are your main responsibilities and duties?

Section 2: **Gaps in education courses offered in the teacher education programme**

2. What role do you think guidance and counselling as an education courses plays in the development of competent teachers?
3. In your opinion, how critical is special and inclusive education as an education course for teacher preparedness?
4. What are the consequences of not offering education administration and management as a core course?
5. How do you think the exclusion of Information Communication Technology as a core education course affects the preparedness of future teachers?
6. How does the absence of financial education as a core course during teacher education affect teachers' professional development?
7. What are your thoughts on the relevance of curriculum instruction strategies and assessment as an education course for student teachers?
8. Do you think every pre-service teacher should possess skills in co-curricular activities? Please elaborate.

Section 3: **Recommendation on education courses to be added as core education courses to the teacher education programme**

9. What knowledge areas do you think need more focus to better prepare pre-service teachers?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

APPENDIX VII: Approval of the Study

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

Great East Road Campus | P.O. Box 32379 | Lusaka10101 | Tel: +260-211-290 258/291 777 **Fax**: (+260)-211-290 258/253 952 | E-**mail**: director.drgs@unza.zm | Website: www.unza.zm

APPROVAL OF STUDY

IORG No. 0005376
HSSREC IRB No. 00006464
REF NO. HSSREC-2024-AUG-043

19th September, 2024

Mr Sydney Peunja
The University of Zambia
P.O. Box 32379
LUSAKA

Dear Mr Peunja

RE: "AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT A UNIVERSITY IN LUSAKA PROVINCE, ZAMBIA: A FOCUS ON EDUCATION COURSES"

Reference is made to your submission of the protocol captioned above. The HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

REVIEW TYPE	ORDINARY REVIEW	APPROVAL NO. HSSREC:2024-AUG-043
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 20th September, 2024	Expiry Date: 19th September, 2025
Protocol Version and Date	Version - Nil.	19th September, 2025
Information Sheet, Consent Forms and Dates	English.	To be provided
Consent form ID and Date	Version - Nil	To be provided
Recruitment Materials	Nil	Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire.	
Number of Participants Approved for Study		

Specific conditions will apply to this approval. As Principal Investigator it is your responsibility to ensure that the contents of this letter are adhered to. If these are not adhered to, the approval may be suspended. Should the study be suspended, study sponsors and other regulatory authorities will be informed.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

- No participant may be involved in any study procedure prior to the study approval or after the expiration date.

- All unanticipated or Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) must be reported to HSSREC within 5 days.

- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address.

- All protocol deviations must be reported to HSSREC within 5 working days.

- All recruitment materials must be approved by HSSREC prior to being used.

- Principal investigators are responsible for initiating Continuing Review proceedings. HSSREC will only approve a study for a period of 12 months.

- It is the responsibility of the PI to renew his/her ethics approval through a renewal application to HSSREC.

- Where the PI desires to extend the study after expiry of the study period, documents for study extension must be received by HSSREC at least 30 days before the expiry date. This is for the purpose of facilitating the review process. Documents received within 30 days after expiry will be labelled "late submissions" and will incur a penalty fee of K500.00. No study shall be renewed whose documents are submitted for renewal 30 days after expiry of the certificate.

- Every 6 (six) months a progress report form supplied by The University of Zambia Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee as an IRB must be filled in and submitted to us. There is a penalty of K500.00 for failure to submit the report.

- When closing a project, the PI is responsible for notifying, in writing or using the Research Ethics and Management Online (REMO), both HSSREC and the National Health Research Authority (NHRA) when ethics certification is no longer required for a project.

- In order to close an approved study, a Closing Report must be submitted in writing or through the REMO system. A Closing Report should be filed when data collection has ended and the study team will no longer be using human participants or animals or secondary data or have any direct or indirect contact with the research participants or animals for the study.

- Filing a closing report (rather than just letting your approval lapse) is important as it assists HSSREC in efficiently tracking and reporting on projects. Note that some funding agencies and sponsors require a notice of closure from the

IRB which had approved the study and can only be generated after the Closing Report has been filed.

- A reprint of this letter shall be done at a fee.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC by way of an application for an amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address or methodology and methods. Many modifications entail minimal risk adjustments to a protocol and/or consent form and can be made on an Expedited basis (via the IRB Chair). Some examples are: format changes, correcting spelling errors, adding key personnel, minor changes to questionnaires, recruiting and changes, and so forth. Other, more substantive changes, especially those that may alter the risk-benefit ratio, may require Full Board review. In all cases, except where noted above regarding subject safety, any changes to any protocol document or procedure must first be approved by HSSREC before they can be implemented.

Should you have any questions regarding anything indicated in this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at the above indicated address.

On behalf of HSSREC, we would like to wish you all the success as you carry out your study.

Yours faithfully,

DR. ELIJAH M. BWALYA
ACTING CHAIRPERSON
THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - IRB

cc: Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Director (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Registrar (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies

APPENDIX VIII: Letter of Permission to conduct Research in School of Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT DEAN (POSTGRADUATE)
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Telephone 291777/291381
Telegram: UNZA, LUSAKA
Telex: UNZALU ZA 44370

P.O. Box 32379
Lusaka, Zambia
Fax:+260-1-25395

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: FIELD WORK FOR MASTERS/~~PhD STUDENTS~~

The bearer of this letter Mr. ~~Ms.~~ Sydney Peunja .....Computer number. 202300744 7 .....is a duly registered student at the University of Zambia, School of Education.

He/~~She~~ is taking a Masters/~~PhD~~ programme in Education. The programme has a fieldwork component which he/~~she~~ has to complete.

We shall greatly appreciate if the necessary assistance is rendered to him/~~her~~.

Yours faithfully,

Sitwe Benson Mkandawire (PhD)
ASSISTANT DEAN- POSTGRADAUTE
c.c. Dean, Education
Director, DRGS

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
ASSISTANT DEAN (PG)
29 JUL 2024
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
P. O. BOX 32379, LUSAKA