

The Relevance of the Zambian Languages Teacher Education Programme to the School's Needs and Aspirations: The Case of One Public University in Zambia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish the relevance of the Zambian Languages Teacher Education programme at one of the public universities in Zambia to the needs and aspirations of Zambian secondary schools. The sample size of the study was fourteen (14) comprising six fourth year Zambian Languages students, two teacher educators from the Literature and Languages Department for the content courses and two teacher educators from the Languages and Social Sciences Education Department for the methods courses. The study also included four former students at the university who studied Linguistics and African Languages (LAL) programme at bachelor's degree level. Interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis were used to collect data from the participants. The study findings established that the programme was partially relevant as it equipped the trainee teachers with the right content, teaching methodology, revitalised cultural awareness and built teacher confidence in schools. However, the programme exhibited multiple weaknesses that included lack of programme harmonisation between what was offered at the University to what graduates taught in schools. Trainee teachers had inadequate time for peer teaching (micro-teaching) as well as teaching practice, lacked teaching and learning material. The programme had a biased instruction in one Zambian language and English instead of teaching in all the regional official languages which were to be taught by the teachers in schools.

Key words: Zambian languages, teacher educators.

1.1 Introduction

The role of any educational institution is to provide learning experiences to help students learn, alleviating them from the bondage of darkness and ignorance to the light of knowledge. Teachers and learning facilitators are among the resources required in learning institutions to bring about this transformation (Mkandawire & Ilon, 2018). Therefore, teacher training institutions should design good teacher education programmes that are rich in both theory and practice. Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the

requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein (Chaurasia 2000). In Zambia, teacher education programmes are offered in colleges of education and universities. In all these institutions, teacher education programmes are made of two parts: theory and practice. Most institutions have rich theory package and weak practical segments. For instance, Manchishi and Mwanza (2016) noted that students in the school of education did not have adequate teaching practice time for them to be effective teachers despite having the content. The teaching methodology component is very important for the delivery of content in classes. The weaknesses in practical aspects in teacher training programmes may be associated with multiple factors especially in indigenous languages. Halawah (2008) argues that trainee teachers may have negative attitudes towards the teaching of a mother tongue due to several reasons (Mkandawire, 2017). The attitude may be built by the teacher educators who lack the zeal to impart the relevant knowledge into teachers so that they can stand and deliver the materials before learners. Also, Kildan and Duran (2013) hold that most of the teacher trainees who had participated in the study had expressed the view that the four-year education provided by the faculties of education was insufficient and the trainee teachers were not confident to teach in schools.

In exploring the policy, Ministry of Higher Education (2014) contends that only accredited colleges and universities will have the opportunity to prepare teachers to teach in the Zambian schools and hold various qualifications ranging from diplomas to master's degrees. To this, Sakala (2019) added that the teacher training institutions did not invest in the teaching and learning materials which were syllabus responsive. The problem of teaching and learning materials in learning institutions in Zambia have been reported in several studies (Mwanza, 2012; Mwanza and Mkandawire 2020; Tambulukani, 2001; Iversen and Mkandawire, 2020). Some teacher training institutions depended on the old books that were donated by government even when the curriculum changed to respond to the needs of the society. Further, Luke (2004) noted that trainee teachers of African languages were being discriminated against in the colleges, universities, and the schools that they were not educated hence they went for African languages. He added that this reduced the enrolment levels in the next enrolment which created a continuous shortage of African languages teachers in many countries.

Meanwhile, other scholars like (Mulenga 2015; Manchishi 2016; Mkandawire et al., 2022; Masaiti and Mwanza 2016; Mkandawire et al., 2023; Mwanza 2018) have all written on the need for the curriculum and syllabi to be relevant to the needs of the students, learners and to address issues of specialization. In Botswana, Major and Tiro (2012) found that the teacher education programme did not address the quality and the relevance that was expected for it to reflect upon one joining the teaching profession which is like the call presented in the Zambian context. In view of this, USAID (2015) advise that teacher training colleges and

universities must ensure that teachers of Zambian languages (ZL) must be specialised in the language they are to teach if they will be effective teachers. If teacher training was to be effective, the teachers being trained should be vested in the language they are to teach in schools after graduation.

In exploring institutional and programme weaknesses, Banja (2013) indicated that there are several institutional weaknesses in the provision of teacher education at the university. Prominent among these weaknesses is the inadequacy of teaching practice experiences for student teachers and the mismatch between subject content offered at the university and content taught at the secondary school level. In addition, Mata (2014) highlights that mother tongue teacher education programmes are critical in preserving local cultures, values, and beliefs. He notes that these programmes help learners and other stakeholders in the community appreciate their indigenous languages.

A study by Nyimbili, Sakala, and Mungala (2022) found that Cinyanja classrooms in Tumbuka schools were not learning Cinyanja using the curriculum-prescribed methodologies because the language being taught is not familiar to the learners hence teachers used the familiar language to teach the target language. Teachers used multilingual practices like translation, code-switching, and code mixing among others to enable learners to have access to knowledge in their classrooms which also manifested in their writing. Further, Tembo and Nyimbili (2021) asserted that teachers were forced to use Nsenga in their teaching because learners provided answers in Nsenga instead of the Cinyanja which was not familiar to them. This then leaves space to enhance translanguaging in such schools so as to realise the full potential of the learners and their languages as Nsenga has proved its practicality in teaching learners. From this, it can be argued that teachers use multilingual practices in classes where the learner's language is not the language of instruction.

The presented negative attitudes by teachers in the schools and universities has been pointed out by Mwanza (2021) to be aspects of colonial mentalities. He, therefore, calls for the decolonisation of the teacher's mind which has been built to understand that the local languages were not important to the nation since they did not provide an academic avenue to success. Further, Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) have argued that local language use has cultural benefits which accrue to the learners, teachers, and the nation since this is through which every person is able to express his or her culture. If such cultural benefits are to be realised, there was need for the teachers and lecturers to use their rich culture and teach the younger generation to continue upholding the local language and its cultural heritage (Mkandawire et al., 2019; Kafusha et al., 2021).

1.2 Problem statement

Mulenga (2015), Banja (2012), Chabatama (2012), Manchishi and Masaiti (2011), Manchishi and Mwanza (2016) have had concerns about the quality of teachers graduating

from the university as well as their ability to translate theory into practice and being able to meet the aspirations and needs of the schools. This study sought to assess the relevance of the programme of the Zambian Languages Teacher Education being offered at one public university.

1.3 Objectives

- i. determine the relevance of the programme of the Zambian Languages Teacher Education programme at one public university.
- ii. Establish the awareness and expectation of the Zambian language trainee teacher in school.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study used the qualitative approach, and a case study design was relevant for this study because it enabled the researcher to collect data from one institution where the study problem was. The study sample size of the study included six (6) fourth year Zambian Languages students, Two (2) Teacher Educators from Literature and Languages department for the content courses and Two (2) Teacher Educators from Languages and Social Sciences Education department for the methods courses. It also included four (4) former students who studied LAL programme. The former students were teaching in the Eastern province of Zambia. It was easy to interview the teachers in Eastern province because of their availability. Purposive Sampling was used because the researcher wanted participants who had information that the researcher was interested in. To sample trainee teachers, homogeneous sampling was used. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to target the fourth-year students and the standards officer so that data was collected from the supervisors of teachers in the district and everyone in the African Linguistics class. Snowball sampling was used to sample the former students who completed and were teaching in the various secondary schools in Zambia.

Interviews were conducted with Teacher Educators in the department of literature and languages and the Languages social sciences education, Standard Officers at the Ministry of Education, Former ZL trainee teachers who are currently serving as ZL teachers. Focus Group Discussion (FDG) was conducted with the final year students. All the registered fourth year students were six (6). Subjective responses from focus group discussion and semi structured interviews were analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The study was ethically approved and all the procedures like anonymity, secrecy, confidentiality, and consent were followed in the study.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher Educators, trainee teachers, current serving ZL teachers who are former LAL students at one public university and Standard Officers from the DEBS office were sampled and interviewed on their views on the Zambia Languages Education programme.

3.1 Relevance of the content and methods of the ZL programme to the needs and aspirations of the schools.

The findings are presented in relation to the relevance of the ZL programme to the content and methods courses offered to the needs and aspirations of schools. The following are the presented responses that were taken from teacher educators, trainee teachers, standard officers and former LAL students

3.1.1 Responses from Teacher educators

The Teacher Educators had different views pertaining to how the content and methods of the ZL programme was relevant to teachers being trained, schools and the nation as a whole. All the Teacher Educators asked felt the content and methods of the programme were not relevant. One participant said,

Methodology has been tailored to what is needed in the schools however the challenge is the content which is very theoretical. Hence there is a missing link to harmonise the theoretical into practical. Two schools needed to harmonise and come up with something that can be very relevant.

3.1.2 Findings from the Documents for Teacher Training Department

The teaching content from the department of Language and Social Science Education was analysed to understand how the programme was designed and its relevance to the trainee teachers in the university. Two courses were relevant for analysis in this study which included LSE 3080: African Languages Teaching Methods (Secondary) and LSE 4080: Advanced African Languages Teaching Methods. The rationale for teaching LSE 3080 is that the course help students to apply the theoretical knowledge they have acquired in linguistics courses to the teaching of Zambian languages in secondary schools. Students are introduced to the principles of first language teaching principles and through a hands-on approach apply these to the teaching of language skills. This is done through lecturer demonstrations and peer teaching sessions involving the students themselves. At the end of the course, students are expected to do a practicum in secondary schools of their choice.

This course provides the teaching content which include: the multilingual situation in Africa and Zambia; First language acquisition in Bantu languages; Principles of first language (L1) teaching; Bantu languages in education; the structure of Bantu languages and the interrelationships of syllabus, scheme of work, lesson plan and record of work. The course

goes further to go into a critical analysis of the junior and senior secondary school syllabi in Zambian languages. The course provides a thorough discussion of the teaching and testing of macro and micro skills which include grammar, standard orthography, efficient, intensive and extensive reading, composition, summary, translation, oral and written literature, culture, oracy (oral and aural skills) and Peer teaching. This course account for the teaching time of 2 hours per week with two hours of tutorial or peer teaching or seminars with peer teaching accounting for 15 percent of the total marks of the course. From the course guide and outline, it is evident that the design of the LSE 3080: African Languages Teaching Methods (Secondary) is well prepared for the students to acquire the planned skills. Therefore, it is up to the teacher educators to demarcate the time to handle a component for the semester to ensure that all the topics are covered and examined in the given semester or year.

LSE 4080 (Advanced African Languages Teaching Methods) is a course which is offered after teaching LSE 3080. While the 4080 course is consolidating and enhancing the practical aspects of language teaching, it introduces students to theoretical issues that underpin these practices. These are issues to do with what is internal to the learner, the psychological factors of language learning and teaching and the sociolinguistic factors such as the social, political and cultural contexts in which language learning takes place.

The course offers the following teaching contents: Review of School Teaching Practice which guides on what a teacher must do and be able to teach in a classroom. It offers the historical background to the teaching of mother tongues in Africa, Pre-post independent language policies in English, French and Portuguese speaking Africa, the status of African mother tongues in relation to second and foreign languages, language, and dialect. The course also discusses how language planning in multilingual contexts has been perceived and how it has affected the Zambian linguistic status of Zambian languages. The other course content is the review of the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching language skills and grammar in a Bantu first language which are (grammar in a mother tongue, reading comprehension, translation, literature, and writing). The other contents include designing the mother tongue curriculum and syllabus design, designing, and using suitable teaching materials, the teaching of poetry in African languages, assessment in mother tongue teaching and managing the Languages section/department in the school comes last.

The courses have an allocation of two hours per week with two hours of tutorial, practical and seminars. The design and the contents aim at preparing the teachers for the teaching tasks in the Zambian set up using the appropriate teaching methodology. With this information available, it be understood that the design and teaching is relevant for the teacher training course in the Zambian schools and education system.

The study findings revealed that the content being offered at the university is theoretical linguistics which did not prepare student as direct teachers of Zambian languages.

It provided more content for teaching instead of more practices on how to teach the content as teachers of Zambian languages. This study agrees with Major and Tiro (2012) who did a study in Botswana and found that the teacher education programme did not address the quality and the relevance that was expected for it to reflect upon one joining the teaching profession. Furthermore, it was revealed that the teacher education programme contributed very little in as far as the development of an effective teacher was concerned. The study indicated that too much of time was spent on exploring theory and less time of hands-on experience such as teaching experience hence the teachers did not perform effectively in class.

The study further revealed that the Zambian Languages teacher education programme is not relevant to the schools needs and aspirations because what was taught is not applicable to what they experience in the real classroom. Current serving ZL teachers felt that the programme is not relevant to the needs of the schools. This is because the orthography and the syllabus in Zambian languages were not clarified nor explained to them during their school days. (Mulenga 2015: Manchishi 2016: Masaiti and Mwanza 2016: and Mwanza 2018) have all written on the need for the curriculum and syllabi to be relevant to the needs of the students, learners and to address issues of specialization.

3.2 Zambian Languages School Syllabus

Responses from teacher educators, trainee teachers, former ZL students and Standard Officers are presented below pertaining to the relevance of the content and methods of the ZL Teacher education programme.

3.2.1 Responses from trainee teachers

Many of the trainee teachers felt they did not have enough skills to teach Zambian languages especially that they did not know the syllabus. They also did not know the correct orthography of their languages. One participant said:

I feel am not well prepared to teach because I don't know the Zambian Languages syllabus because every time, we prepared lessons for peer teaching in Zambian Languages we used the batch to prepare the lesson. I have never even seen the ZL syllabus.

Another participant said that:

Our Teacher Educators always tell us that there is a problem with our orthography of our languages, so I feel I don't know what to do if a learner asks me a question and it has to do with orthography.

Another participant said:

I feel we may be half baked Zambian languages teachers the method courses we feel we know, but the content we are not sure especially that we have never seen the syllabus.

When it came to the syllabus, all the students were not familiar with the Zambian syllabus and did not remember having a look at the syllabus. One student said,

I do not remember having any lesson on the Zambian syllabus. I only heard our Teacher Educator say, the syllabus is problematic. But I do not know how it is problematic. I have never seen it.

3.2.2 Responses from Teacher Educators

The teacher educators felt that the ZL syllabus was not linked to the content that is covered in the university. They however indicated having sufficient knowledge of the ZL syllabus. One Teacher Educator said that:

Zambian languages syllabus is not linked to the needs of students studying Zambian languages. It has been observed that the content, methods and approaches used to teach Zambian languages were the same as those used for English language.

One Teacher Educator said:

In as much as we ensure that the ZL syllabus is linked to the courses we offer, it should be said that it is also difficult to apply teaching methods taken from the second language in this case English and apply them when teaching Zambian languages.

He continued to say that:

For example, the communicative approach to language teaching is not directly equivalent to Zambian language because children are already competent in communication hence a teacher cannot make them competent in communicating a language which is their mother tongue.

The Teacher Educator concluded and said that “*In this case, the design is not responsive to the needs of the students because it does not follow what has been recommended in the Zambian languages school syllabus.*” Another Teacher Educator said that “*To a larger extent, the methods courses covers what is supposed to be covered in schools as it follows what has been outlined in the Zambian syllabus.*” A Teacher Educator from the literature section said,

The literature aspect in the syllabus was well covered because it is rich in what it requires a teacher to teach. We read different books though in one language, but it helped to ground us.

3.2.3 Responses from former ZL students (serving teachers)

When asked if the current serving teachers had made any observation regarding the teaching practices and the application of the theory, they learnt. It was interesting to note the syllabus presented major challenges to them. One teacher said that,

Now that I am familiar with the ZL syllabus, I can mention some of the challenges I face. The syllabi are general in terms of content. It's not specific as compared to the English language. It is not clear as the English language when it comes to learning outcomes.

One teacher mentioned that:

For example, when teaching composition, it is general. It is not specific in terms of the expected outcomes. Even when it comes to testing, topics such as minute taking is not examined.

Another teacher stated that, "Most of the things taught are not examined. I don't know if that is how it is or what?" The findings further revealed that the fact that the syllabus is written in English, it provides challenges to teachers of Zambian Languages to teach. One teacher said that,

The syllabus is written in English making it hard for us because we are required to teach in Chichewa but everything else is in English. All terminologies are in English. So, it is up to us to translate.

From the finding, some teachers of ZL did not deliver well in the Zambian language lessons because they did not understand the language they were to teach. It is also clear that the Zambia language teacher training programme at prepared general language teachers or linguists and not specialists in teaching. This is not in tandem with USAID (2015) who advise that teacher training colleges and universities must ensure that teachers of ZL must be specialised in the language they are to teach if they will be effective teachers. If teacher training was to be effective, the teachers being trained should be vested in the language they are to teach in schools after graduation. The thought about this revelation is that the Universities should employ specialists in different language so that the training is language specific like what happens at Solwezi College of Education. the three languages, Luvale, Kaonde and Lunda have specialised lecturer who are vested in the languages instead of using one lecturer for all languages. such would help lift the linguistic standards and content delivery in class.

The study findings revealed that the trainee teachers did not know what went on and did not understand the needs of learners in a real classroom situation because they did not go on a full-term teaching practice, but few weeks and they graduated. This created anxiety among the trainee teachers because it made them feel less prepared to teach. The findings

correspond with Banja (2013) who indicated that there are several institutional weaknesses in the provision of teacher education at the Prominent among these weaknesses is the inadequacy of teaching practice experiences for student teachers and the mismatch between subject content offered at the and content taught at the secondary school level. The two conclude that this combination of poor teacher preparation affects teacher quality, which in turn affects educational delivery by the teachers. The need to expose the trainee teachers more to teaching practice cannot be overemphasised. The former students who are current serving teachers mourn this gap. This issue needs to be addressed if the ZL delivery and design will be relevant to the needs of the schools.

3.3 Awareness of the Zambian Languages Syllabus

The following responses were recorded pertaining to the awareness of the Zambian Languages syllabus from trainee teachers, teacher educators and former students.

3.3.1 Responses from Zambian Languages teachers (former students who studied Linguistics and African languages)

Former students who studied the Zambian Languages programme and are currently serving as teachers were sampled and interviewed. When asked specifically if the ZL teacher had an opportunity to learn and understand the ZL syllabus during their training years. One teacher said that *“The Zambian Languages school programme did not prioritise the teaching of Zambian Languages school syllabus in their course content.”* Another teacher said that:

I never saw and learnt about the Zambian Languages syllabus during my training days. I saw it when I started working as a full-time teacher. Of course, I now know it.

Another former student teaching Cichewa said:

I only heard about the syllabus when Teacher Educators made references to it, but we were never given a chance to touch it or learn about it. All I knew was that it was problematic.

Another teacher said that *“I have the content now, but I never saw the syllabus before.”* When asked if there are linkages between the ZL syllabus and the course content they learnt at. One respondent said that:

The different topics we need to teach such as grammar, comprehension, composition and literature are a reality because we also learnt these things. However, when we were at it was hard to know and understand what we were studying.

3.3.2 Harmonisation of content and method courses

In terms of harmonization of content and methods so that students can go and deliver their lesson effectively. Teacher educators felt that there was no harmonisation between what was offered by School of Humanities (content) and the School of Education (methods). One Teacher Educator said:

The department for Literature and Languages is responsible for ensuring that students are taught in line with content. They ensure all outlined topics and courses in the programme are done and passed by all students. The department of Language and social sciences education ensures that the trainee teachers have teaching experience and practice. They do this through peer-to-peer practice and actual teaching practice.

Another Teacher Educator said:

School of humanities is responsible for the content while school of education is responsible for the methods course. What I can say is, now it has been hard to harmonise because we are dealing with two different schools.

Another Teacher Educator said:

It has Rich theoretical area, but it needs to be harmonized. If they took content in the same school, it would have been harmonized and relevant. But now we are producing more of Linguists than Zambian Language teachers.

The study further revealed that, the ZL programme at does not prepare students who are well specialised in terms of specialization in the language they will be teaching in schools. It was also found that teachers trained from had the content but did not have the methodology to deliver the content. In doing so, the teachers were oriented in the schools they went to so that they could know how to teach in Zambian language and the Zambian language. This agrees with Manchishi and Mwanza (2016) who noted that students in the School of Education did not have adequate teaching practice time for them to be effective teachers. Despite having the content, the teaching methodology was very important if one was to be a teacher and deliver the content. There is need for content harmonisation between the school of education and humanities so that trainee teachers are prepared for the purpose of teaching whilst in the university. This should include content and calendar to fit the teaching experience and attachments as per school requirements.

3.3.3 Peer Teaching

With regards to assessing the relevance of the programme of ZL programme, important issues were raised concerning the peer teaching done at. The following responses were made.

3.3.3.1 Responses from Teacher Educators

Teacher Educators felt that the peer teaching done at is not relevant and does not meet the needs and aspirations of the schools. It was generally felt that the peer teaching done was not adequate to prepare a trainee teacher for the teaching experience one needed. They also felt that the linguistic differences provided difficult situations in which peers would communicate during peer lessons. One Teacher Educator noted that:

The period was not enough for any student to become confident to teach. In addition, the different linguistic differences in the classroom provided a challenge to the trainee teachers to effectively teach.

3.3.4 School Experience

With regards to school experience the serving ZL teachers and teacher educators felt that the school experience was not adequate and relevant to meet the needs of the learners and the school at large. The following were their responses.

3.3.4.1 Responses from ZL teachers

The current ZL teachers felt that did not expose them to adequate school teaching experience. One teacher said:

Of course, we apply the concepts we learnt but it has been hard to make it worse we never had adequate teaching practice experience. I never even did any peer teaching in my language while I was at the university. I only did in Literature and English.

Another teacher said,

I only taught for one month and I never went back to teach again. How was I supposed to be experienced like that? It was very hard for me to get used to teaching when I finally starting teaching. The long serving teacher helped me, otherwise it would have been a disaster.

3.3.4.2 Responses from Teacher educators

One teacher educator said,

School experience is too short, what has been decided will give more time to practice but there will be no time for evaluation. The students currently go for school experience at the end of the programme, who will evaluate their performance. It is very difficult.

Another teacher educator said:

The teaching and learning materials which trainee teachers are supposed to use are also in short supply as the Ministry of Education does not supply us like it use before. We leave such a task to the student to source of the materials.

The study found that the trainee teachers felt that they were not confident to teach in the language which they were to teach in school because they didn't have enough time to use the language during lectures as well as during peer teaching. The methodology course was a one semester course which was not comprehensive and lacked enough practices while on training. The findings agree with Kildan and Duran (2013) who showed that most of the teacher trainees who had participated in the study had expressed the view that the four-year education provided by the faculties of education was insufficient and the trainee teachers were not confident to teach in schools. The study further revealed that teacher trainees felt themselves least prepared in professional education courses since they did not practice how to teach longer while at training. This means that most university programmes do not help students acquire the necessary pedagogical skills and that the teacher trainers themselves do not have ideas about what is obtaining in schools. The foregoing is not practical since the teachers were able to teach during teaching practice and after getting employed. In view of this, students may not understand what ought to be taught in the university and they expect perhaps to go through the syllabus for pupils for them to realise that they are being prepared for school, yet it is the opposite.

The study findings revealed that the trainee teachers did not feel confident to teach Zambian languages in schools although they were being trained. It was revealed that the teachers were provided with the right content, but they were not fully exposed to the actual teaching or delivery of the teaching content they learnt. The findings are supported by Halawah (2008) who indicated that trainee teachers may have negative attitudes towards the teaching of a mother tongue due to a number of reasons. The attitude is built by the Teacher Educators who lack the zeal to impart the relevant knowledge into teachers so that they can stand and deliver the materials before learners. Lack of understanding on how to deliver the known content results into the students not being confident with the material they are delivering in class. In forwarding further the argument, it should be realised that confidence comes with content understanding which was delivered to the students whilst in the university. Classroom management is what calls for teaching confidence so that learners realises that the teacher has the content and not vice versa. Therefore, Zambian language programme by design has all the necessary content requirements yet the trainee teachers have not the confidence to deliver in class.

The study findings also revealed that the university lacked adequate teaching materials for trainee teachers to use during peer teaching. These ranged from conversational posters, books in standard orthography while the texts and Cichewa books found were in the Malawian situation and story line. The study agrees with Sakala (2019) who found that the teacher training institutions did not invest in the teaching and learning materials which were syllabus responsive. They depended on the old books which were donated by government even when the curriculum changed to respond to the needs of the society. The lack of investment resulted into the teachers being trained not being conversant with the teaching materials which were in schools.

3.5 Awareness of what is expected of trainee teachers to teach in schools.

In assessing the relevance of the ZL programme to the needs and aspirations of schools, trainee teachers and serving ZL teachers felt that lack of orientation of the programme affected the relevancy of the programme. The respondents did not know what to expect and most of them did not know that they would be required to teach Zambian languages after completion of their studies.

3.5.1 Responses from ZL teachers/former ZL students

When asked for further explanation, it was revealed that Zambia Languages programme at did not orient the students on the programme. Some students were not clearly told what the course was all about and what career paths the programme provided for them. One teacher had this to say,

We were lured to take up this course because we didn't understand what the programme was all about. We were not told that we will be teaching Zambian languages. We thought we would work in the bank, media houses.

Another participant said that:

My expectation was that I was being trained as a Linguist and not a teacher. I was prepared to go and work at the bank, ZNBC, UN and other places. We were told we would be writers, editors and the like. I did not know I was going to teach until fourth year when it was time for teaching practice. It was a nightmare because I knew nothing about the subject I was going to teach.

3.5.2 Responses from trainee teachers

The trainee teachers felt that the programme was adequately oriented to them. They only got recommendations from friends who had done the course. One trainee teacher said:

I feel this programme is not known by many. If it was made aware to many, I feel many students would have registered for it. I only got the

recommendation to take up LAL courses from my friend who did this programme.

Another trainee said,

Our association is not even that active like other associations. It is their responsibility to orient new students and encourage new students to join the association. That way the programme will always be known by many. Orientation is not done and has never been done for our programme hence the numbers of students enrolled in the programme kept reducing every year.

The foregoing findings have revealed that the students were oriented into the Zambian Languages programme on its design. Some students were not clearly told what the course was all about and what career paths the programme provided for them as they were not told that they were going to be teaching Zambian languages. Some serving teachers felt that they were lured to take up the programme. The findings are not in tandem with Ministry of Higher Education (2014) which holds that only accredited colleges and universities will have the opportunity to prepare teachers to teach in the Zambian schools and hold various qualifications ranging from diplomas to master's degrees. The Zambian education system starts with academic orientation of students to the courses they are to take so that they are aware of what they are to become. This failure to orient students makes them fail to know what language they are to teach in schools since they learnt in English and hardly practiced the Zambian language they were to teach. It can also be argued that some students do not value orientation when they enter the university because of different perceptions. This makes them miss important information from the schools and departments which make them realise at last the course they entered. Seriousness from the students must be recorded if they are to achieve what they followed in the institution for the four years they have spent.

The study found that the negative attitude that parents, students, and members of the community hold affect the choice of the Zambian language programme amongst the students who apply to the university. This has resulted into having very few students studying as teachers of Zambian languages. It was further revealed that the fact the programme is coordinated between two schools, it presented a challenge to the students. The study agrees with Luke (2004) who noted that trainee teachers of African languages were being discriminated against in the colleges, universities, and the schools that they were not educated hence they went for African languages. He added that this reduced the enrolment levels in the next enrolment which created a continuous shortage of African languages teachers in many countries. This situation is the true reality in Zambia. The teachers of Zambian languages have been in short supply because they are not trained in numbers.

3.6 Merits of the Programme

It was critical that we assess the relevance of the programme to ZL Teacher Education to the needs and aspirations of the schools by understanding the merits of the programme. The following responses were given.

3.6.1 Promotion and appreciation of Local languages

With regards to merits of the programme, the Stand Officers said that the programme promotes local languages. The respondent said that,

Our languages are not promoted in this country. The programme is good because it promotes our languages. I believe this programme will help promote our languages.

One trainee teacher said, *“It is very great programme because it promotes our languages, what we need is to improve the content and help us feel confident.* Another trainee teacher said that,

This programme has helped me appreciate my local languages. Rather than embrace the so-called English Language. would encourage others to study this programme. I do not want this programme to die.

One trainee teacher who had not majored in Linguistics and African languages but took it as a minor course had this to say, *“I regret not majoring in Linguistics. It is a very good programme as it promotes our languages that have been looked down upon.”* When asked on the merits of the Zambian Languages programme at the trainee teachers had this to say,

We have learnt to appreciate and love our Zambian languages and that our Zambian languages are so rich with culture skills, values that each of us need to treasure.

The Teacher Educators felt that the ZL programme promotes the use of local languages that have been abandoned in our society. One Teacher Educator had this to say,

The programme is good as it promotes our local languages that have been neglected and abandoned for so many generations. We are ensuring that each student and the society at large begin to appreciate indigenous knowledge values and beliefs.

Another Teacher Educator felt that the programme helps students appreciate our Zambian cultures. He had this to say,

You know that for literature courses in Zambian languages, they help prepare a linguist or teacher of ZL who will appreciate our culture through a deep understanding of oral literature. Folklores, poetry and African texts help students appreciate our culture so that they begin to

appreciate their customs beliefs and values even in their personal lives. They become responsible citizens who value their roots.

Another Teacher Educator felt that the fact that the programme had been in existence for a long time, it has proved that Zambian languages are important, and this has led to the government to put in place language policies that have helped in preserving our languages as well as promoting their use in schools. The Teacher Educator had this to say,

The ZL programme at the university has been in existence for a long time. The university is the first university to have offered this programme. I believe it has contributed greatly to the Zambian Languages preservation. It has been through our contribution that we have seen policy change in favour of Zambian languages at national level. In schools now we can see Zambian languages been used as a language of instruction in the first four years. We are making progress.

The current serving teachers of ZL pointed out that, despite the ZL Teacher Education programme at the university not being relevant, it still has merits. It was pointed out that it has helped to promote the use of local languages in schools and our community. One respondent said,

3.7 Influences Policy change and implementation.

One participant mentioned that,

The programme has been very critical in influencing policy change and formulation with regards to the use of local languages in schools. I believe Teacher Educators and other Linguists who have come gone through this programme have been very cardinal in influencing the use of local languages in schools as medium of instruction from grade 1 to 4. We have seen how the wrong attitude towards local languages is slowly changing.

In as much as the programme was not relevant to the needs and aspirations of the schools, the programme has been appreciated among the trainee teachers, teacher educators, Education Standard officers and former ZL teachers. They appreciated the role the programme supports, promotes Zambian languages and how it preserves our Zambian culture. Chella et al (2023) and Mata (2014) highlights that mother tongue teacher education programmes are critical in preserving local cultures, values, and beliefs. He notes that these programmes help learners and other stakeholders in the community to appreciate their indigenous languages. The study findings are consistent with Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) who stated that local language use have cultural benefits which accrue to the learners, teachers, and the nation since this is through which every person is able to express his or her

culture. Therefore, local language teacher training needs to be supported if the future Zambians are to understand the relevance of the course at the university under study and other universities.

The Zambian languages programme has been appreciated by the trainee teachers because they are becoming responsible citizens who value their roots. The study findings are supported by Sakala (2020) who found that teaching African and Zambian literature in Zambian languages was one way of making the teachers and students be aware of rich traditions in the community. She added that the learners are also meant to understand the importance of the local languages and the relevance of cultural preservation through language use. This is one way of decolonisation of the teacher's mind which has been built to understand that the local languages were not important to the nation since they did not provide an academic avenue to success (Mwanza, 2020). Through effective Zambian language pedagogical teaching and learning, attitude and mind change have become relevant to the students and teachers who have come to contribute to the development of the Zambian culture in various ways. Such contribution needs to be appreciated and supported so that the university can continue becoming relevant to the national development through indigenous knowledge dissemination.

4 Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that the Zambian languages Teacher education programme at one public university is both relevant and not relevant to the needs and aspirations of the schools. The following are the reasons as to why it is not relevant.

- i. The content offered by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences was packaged to prepare a Linguist and not a Zambian Language teacher.
- ii. The programme did not prepare teachers of Zambian languages who were specialised in one language, but they were prepared into teachers specialised into general Zambian languages.
- iii. The methods courses offered by School of Education did not expose trainee teachers of Zambian Languages adequately to teaching experience. The teaching practice has been scheduled to be done after students sit for final examinations. Peer teaching was inadequate as it only gave each student 20 minutes per semester to teach.

In as much as the programme was not relevant to meet the needs and aspirations of the Zambian schools, the programme is appreciated by trainee teachers, current ZL teachers, teacher educators and Education Standard Officers. The programme was appreciated for its role in supporting, promoting, and preserving of Zambian languages.

4.2 Recommendations

- i. The School of Education should allocate enough time for methodology courses so that the students can have sufficient time to practice teaching of their Zambian language so that they are specialised in the right languages. This will help the trainee teachers to have confidence in what they will be teaching.
- ii. The departments concerned should collaborate with the Curriculum Development Centre so that they are able to access the new copies of teaching and learning materials which are being used in schools. This will help the teachers on training to be confident with their teaching as they will be using the right material to practice on.
- iii. They should consider employing Teacher Educators who have the knowledge of other Zambian languages like Luvale, Lunda and Kaonde so that the students can learn from such diversity culture unlike using one dominant language.

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