

Factors Contributing to Low Enrolment Levels of Students in Teacher Training Institutions In Zambia

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Abstract—The purpose of this study was to investigate factors contributing to low enrolment levels of students in teacher training institutions. The target population consisted of school leavers, parents and heads of colleges in Livingstone, Monze, Lusaka and Kabwe towns of Zambia. The study followed a case study research design. The bulk of the data was elicited through a questionnaire, interviews and complemented by secondary sources specifically institutional enrolment records. This study's findings showed that failure by government to employ teachers in the recent past is the main reason why a good number of school leavers were discouraged from training as teachers. The other reason that seriously contributed to the decline in the number of students in teachers' training colleges was the mandatory merit grade required in the teaching subjects for one to be enrolled in public colleges of education. Prospective students would rather go to universities where the entry qualification is simply five credits. To a smaller extent, the economic and financial status of parents was noted as another barrier to teacher training.

Based on the findings, the study recommended that government should employ more trained teachers in order to motivate and encourage school leavers to train as teachers. Considering the competitive environment colleges of education find themselves in, the study recommended that the government should change the entry qualification from two merits in the teaching subjects to five credits which should include English just like what universities are demanding

Keywords— student enrolment, teacher training institutions, teacher recruitment

I. INTRODUCTION

. In Zambia teacher training programmes are majorly designed to train personnel in the

world of teaching. As noted by [1]. Mwang'ombe (2020:1), "Teaching is a noble profession and teacher preparation and development is very crucial in the attainment of quality and effective teaching." Despite the significance of teacher education, the number of students enrolled to train as teachers is steadily decreasing. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate factors contributing to this decline.

A. Background

Teacher training is among the vital programmes offered in public institutions in Zambia. It is a training that produces teachers that are deployed in both public and private schools. [2]. Teacher education is an important component of education. Through it, school teachers who are considered mentors of any society are prepared and produced (Lucas, 1972). However, in Zambia, admissions and graduation statistics in colleges of education reveal that since 2015 the number of students enrolled to train as teachers has reduced tremendously. Zambia has at least one teacher training college in each of its ten provinces with Southern, and Copperbelt Provinces having two colleges each. Teachers are also trained in public and private universities as well as private colleges which are affiliates to these universities. These Higher education institutions train teachers at different levels. Colleges of education train teachers at diploma levels while universities offer undergraduate programmes.

Despite adequate infrastructure and sufficient teaching staff in these institutions, the enrolment figures of students have drastically dropped. A number of studies have been carried out to establish the factors contributing to the decline in teacher training enrolment in both colleges and

universities. [3]. Chikwature and Oyedele (2016) point out that critical factor influencing low enrolment in teacher training courses is that there is low rate of female lecturers in Further Education Teacher Diploma courses hence a female student cannot be motivated to join the course either. [4]. Sawchuk (2015), points out that some of the reasons may be changes such as teacher qualifications, student teachers prefer studying for a secondary school degree to pursuing primary diploma which attracts lower salary and wages which have made some college students contemplate whether majoring in the primary or secondary diploma program is logical. From 2018, enrolment statistics in teacher training institutions in Zambia began to show an ugly outlook. Enrolment in some colleges of education had dropped to an extent that no student was enrolled in some subjects. In universities, a few students in the schools of education trickled in but the figures were very low. [5]. ZNBC (2022) reports that the Minister of education Douglas Syakalima expressed concern over the low enrolment of candidates in teacher training institutions. Honorable Syakalima said over the years the numbers of students in colleges of education continue to decline which may affect the teaching profession.

In an effort to improve enrolment figures in colleges of education, the usual annual admission interviews were abolished so as to attract more students to apply for admission. Since public universities are autonomous in their operations, individual universities engaged their possible marketing strategies to make awareness campaigns to inform the general populace about their education courses on offer.

Despite various publicity and marketing strategies to improve enrolment figures in colleges of education and in university schools of education, the situation worsened each year. As a result lecturers are left with less loads than their mandate stipulates and this has raised fears in some of the lecturers as they are likely to be transferred to other regions away from their homes. This study therefore critically examined the factors contributing to this enrolment drop with the view of coming up with the mitigatory measures.

B. Problem Statement

Zambian teacher training institutions face serious challenges – particularly challenges such as low enrolment levels of students. Against this background, a further analysis is needed to learn about the factors affecting enrolment rates at higher education institutions and provide answers derived from investigations and literature review. Therefore this research work intends to find out some of the factors that may influence students' enrolment in teacher training institutions especially colleges of education and universities.

C. Research Objective

To establish causes of low student enrolment in colleges of education.

To establish what the entry requirement for admission to teacher training colleges is.

To find out the most effective way to increase student enrolment.

D. Research Questions

What has caused the low enrolment figures in colleges of education ?

What are the entry requirements for admission to teacher training programmes?

What is the effective way to increase student enrolment figures?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviewed the literature on teacher training enrolment. The factors that influence enrolment in teacher training institutions from global, Africa, Zambia and local perspectives are presented. The section will also highlight ways and strategies of increasing student enrolment levels in teacher training institutions.

Research has shown that in the recent past the number of students enrolled in teacher education programmes world over has dropped drastically. [6]. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education report, quoted in *Inside Higher Ed* (2022), reported that the flow of new teachers through government recruitment has slowed to a trickle due to years of declining enrolment in university education programmes. The report observed that many vacant positions in schools have remained unfilled for a long time which has created a serious staff crisis in many schools. According to the report, the major cause of this

enrolment decline is that the teaching job and school conditions are unattractive in America. “When people consider what they study, they have that end goal in mind of what the workforce will look like, and the conditions of our schools have become unattractive to most young students,” (The Inside Higher Education 2023). From the report it clear that prospective students choose programmes that have prospects of good salary.

[7] Obiyai (2020) argues that financial constraints are the major barrier to student enrolment in higher learning institutions. He reports that many students either fail to enroll or withdraw from school due to financial challenges. This is in agreement with reference [3]. Children from poor families are unable to continue with colleges because they cannot afford to pay tuition fees demanded by colleges.

Available literature has revealed that teacher training institutions have taken favourable measures to lure more prospective students into education programmes. [8] Knox (2022) points out some of the strategies colleges have put in place in order to improve students enrolment. “Education colleges and teacher preparation programs are creating new incentives to lure students, hoping to reverse years of enrolment declines and fill classroom vacancies. The University of Central Oklahoma’s college of education is trying all those measures and more to attract students by increasing outreach to non-traditional students and offering more scholarships, the state is slowly building interest among prospective teachers.” (Knox 2023:36)

In Zimbabwe, the reduction in enrolment of students studying education in polytechnics had reached alarming levels between 2010 and 2014. Chikwature [3] (2016:799), in his study on student enrolment in Zimbabwean polytechnics, pointed out that polytechnics devised a robust strategy to improve enrolment levels in education programmes. “In 2012 all polytechnics in Zimbabwe engaged their possible marketing strategies to make awareness campaigns to inform the general populace what the polytechnics offer including the Education Department course in an attempt to boost enrolment figures.”

III. METHODOLOGY

In this research study, a case study design was employed exclusively on colleges of education in

Zambia. Case studies focus on one instance or few instances of a particular phenomenon with account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance (Chikwature and Oyedele 2012). The target population of the study was Registrars of colleges of education, parents and school leavers. From this population, a sample size of 70 participants was selected by use of random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. This consisted ten registrars of ten colleges of education in Southern, Lusaka, Copperbelt and Central Provinces, ten parents selected randomly from the study areas and 50 school leavers also randomly selected from within the study areas. The tools for data collection were questionnaires and interview guide.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.

This section presents findings of the study as well as the discussions based on the results of the study.

A. Presentation of Findings

According to interview responses from some respondents, factors such as financial challenges, lack of bursary services for colleges of education, unfavourable educational policies, and limited employment prospects affect student enrolment process in institutions of teacher training.

Institutional enrolment statistics

The table below shows the statistics of student enrolment in teacher training institutions for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2023

	Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Institution						
TTI 1		230	99	60	120	260
TTI 2		246	131	99	108	235
TTI 3		158	110	30	40	104
TTI 4		390	201	180	120	516
TTI 5		210	165	112	150	528
TTI 6		190	130	104	189	206
TTI 7		409	350	280	300	504
TTI 8		300	290	150	190	290
TTI 8		300	290	150	190	290

For the purposes of anonymity, the questionnaires were coded TTI 1 to TTI 8, where TTI stands for teacher training Institution. Analysis of the responses indicates that all the eight institutions that were selected to participate in the study, showed a steady enrolment reduction from 2019 to 2021 and a slight rise in 2022 and 2023.

Reasons for the decline in enrolment

The researcher interviewed all the registrars of the institutions that participated in the study to establish the factors affecting student enrolment in their institutions.

According to the Registrars, the enrolment levels declined from 2019 to 2021 due to the government's failure to employ trained teachers that period. In 2021 government employed a paltry number of 2500 teachers out of more than 60000 unemployed teachers. This scenario, according to Registrars, demotivated a lot of school leavers who saw no benefits in training as a teacher if at the end they would remain on the street. On the rise of enrolment figures in 2022 and 2023, Registrars attributed it to the pronouncement by government of the republic of Zambia in 2021 that it would employ 30000 teachers the following year. They all pointed out that the actualisation of this pronouncement in 2022 (recruitment of 30000 teachers) motivated many prospective students to enrol as student teachers.

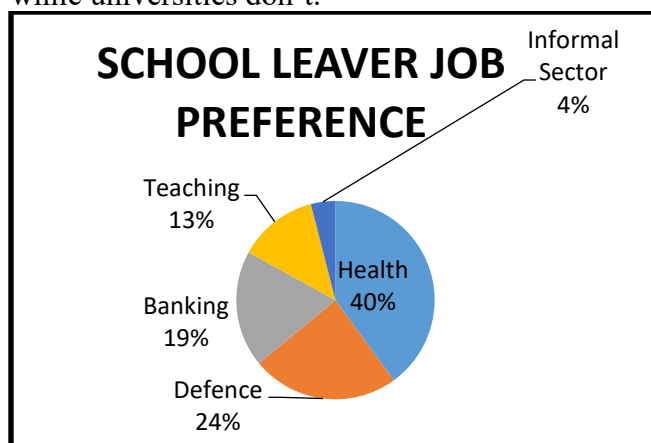
Apart from teacher recruitment motivation, some registrars attributed the rise in enrolment in 2023 to individual institution advertising strategies. They said apart from ministerial publicity, colleges embarked on country wide publicity and recruitment.

Majority of the parents indicated that little employment prospects and poor conditions of the teaching career are rendering it less attractive to prospective students. They argued that the fact that the teaching job is not well paying, parents are unlikely to encourage their children to train as teacher.

On the part of school leavers, their views on teacher training were almost the same as those given by college Registrars. According to school leavers, joining the teaching profession was neither a priority nor a preference. When asked what career they would like to join if given an opportunity, 40% of the school leavers who participated in the study said they preferred joining the ministry of health

either as nurses or doctors. However, 24% said they would prefer joining the defence force either Zambia Army or Zambia Air force. Among the remaining number, 19% chose to be bankers, while 13% chose teaching and a paltry number of 4% said they would remain in the informal sector. Those who preferred joining the defence force said that their parents could not afford paying college tuition fees, consequently they would opt to go for military or police training or better still try university where they may access bursary assistance.

The other factor that seriously affects student enrolment in public teacher training institutions, according to prospective students is the merit qualification in the two teaching subjects on the grade twelve results demanded by the ministry of education as entry qualification for diploma in education programme. They argued that they would rather apply to universities or defence and security where they only demand for five credits than going to colleges of education. Besides public teacher training colleges sell application forms while universities don't.



Measures to improve college student enrolment

Most of the Registrars suggested that due to the competitive environment in teacher education caused by mushrooming private and grant aided colleges of education, colleges of education should devise various methods of improving enrolment numbers of students in their institutions. They proposed that instead of waiting for the official publicity from the ministry of education, individual colleges should be encouraged to advertise across the country and give out application forms to qualified students for free.

B. Discussion

Based on the available literature review and findings of the study, there is a link between education, enrolment and employment prospects. Result obtained from the study showed that government's failure to employ teachers between 2018 and 2021 is a major factor influencing the enrolment of students in teacher training institutions. This is in agreement with the statement of Reference [3] (2016) that lack of employment prospects after training can limit students from furthering their education. [9] Also, students may fail to go for teacher training due to financial constraints (Booyens, J.C. 2009). Prospective students feel demotivated to train in a programme that has little employment prospects.

Data obtained from research question 2 revealed that the merit in the two teaching subjects required by colleges as entry qualification is a barrier to student enrolment. Prospective students see no reason for enrolling in diploma programme that demands for a merit when qualification to study a degree qualification is just five credits. In addition, poor conditions of teachers seem to send a negative public impression. The low social economic status of teachers influences enrolment of students in teacher training programmes. It has also been revealed that parents and guardians in general, seemed to be apparently discouraging their children from venturing into teacher training programmes.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that student enrolment levels in teacher training institutions declined between 2019 and 2021 due to failure by government to employ enough teachers. It was also revealed that the merit grade in the two teaching subjects required for admission into colleges of education is a barrier to student enrolment as prospective students opt to apply to universities which demand for five credits as admission qualification. On the other hand, in 2022 and 2023, student enrolment rose and almost doubled in some institutions. This is attributed to government's recruitment of 30000 teachers in 2022. In this regard, prospective students saw a bit of hope as far as employment prospects were concerned in the ministry of education.

From the research findings, it will be recommended that:

Government should continue recruiting more teachers until all trained teachers are employed so as to motivate school leavers to join teaching.

The ministry of education should change the entry qualification for admission from two merits in the teaching subject to five credits.

Bursary and loan schemes should also be extended to public colleges of education in order to attract high student enrolments in colleges of education.

4. Colleges are encouraged to organise publicity activities that will advertise colleges' programmes to the public

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