

MUSTER

Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project

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Discussion Paper

24

The Experience of Training: A Study of Students at the National Teacher Training College in Lesotho

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Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER)

MUSTER is a collaborative research project co-ordinated from the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex Institute of Education. It has been developed in partnership with:

- The Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
- The Institute of Education, The National University of Lesotho.
- The Centre for Educational Research and Training, University of Malawi.
- The Faculty of Education, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa.
- The School of Education, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine's Campus, Trinidad.

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MUSTER is focused on generating new understandings of teacher education before, during and after the point of initial qualification as a teacher. Its concerns include exploring how new teachers are identified and selected for training programmes, how they acquire the skills they need to teach effectively, and how they experience training and induction into the teaching profession. The research includes analytical concerns with the structure and organisation of teacher education, the form and substance of teacher education curriculum, the identity, roles and cultural experience of trainee teachers, and the costs and probable benefits of different types of initial teacher training.

MUSTER is designed to provide opportunities to build research and evaluation capacity in teacher education in developing countries through active engagement with the research process from design, through data collection, to analysis and joint publication. Principal researchers lead teams in each country and are supported by three Sussex faculty and three graduate researchers.

This series of discussion papers has been created to provide an early opportunity to share output from sub-studies generated within MUSTER for comment and constructive criticism. Each paper takes a theme within or across countries and offers a view of work in progress.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

COSC	Cambridge Overseas Secondary Certificate
DEP	Diploma in Education (Primary)
ICT	Information and communication technology
MUSTER	Multi-site teacher education research project
NTTC	National Teacher Training College
RE	Religious Education

ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is how student teachers experience the curriculum during their time at college. In particular it seeks to investigate student perceptions about teaching and learning at the National Teacher Training College and their views of tutors, their peers, and the teaching profession. Thus, it provides an opportunity to explore images of teaching and how teacher educators are shaping future teachers through their interactions with them. The data was collected from diaries kept by a small group of student teachers as well as a questionnaire. It was triangulated by other studies done as part of the MUSTER project. As the data was based on a small sample, the conclusions should be regarded as tentative, but they provide some interesting insights.

On the whole, the students are pleased to be at college and are still planning to be primary teachers. Training had made them more aware of the complexities of teaching but had had little impact on attitudes to teaching in general. They valued the professional components of the course, but felt there was a lack of a practical focus. They rated the bridging course highly, as they found the academic aspects of the course difficult, especially science, but there was a need for still more support in English language and study skills. Respondents gave some examples of good teaching from the tutors but also many examples that were less than satisfactory; few tutors are modelling good learner-centred teaching methods. Assessment practices revealed little coordination between subjects and there was some evidence of cheating. The diaries suggest that students' relationships with lecturers are not very good and they are not perceived as good professional role models. Overall, at this stage many students seemed to be struggling to keep up with an overloaded and demanding curriculum, with less than adequate support from tutors.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Candidates who get admitted into teacher education colleges bring with them a massive number of experiences accumulated over many years of primary and secondary education. These contribute to their attitudes towards and perceptions about the various aspects of the teaching profession and/or teacher education in general. The MUSTER sub-study on “Becoming a Teacher” clearly supports this view. While only some students enter with teaching experience, all bring images of good and poor teachers. Subsequently, teacher education students observe and most probably internalise a number of behaviours portrayed by both lecturers and other student teachers during their study period in teacher training institutions. This is an important part of their college experiences. Such experiences in turn might contribute to the attitudes they will take with them into schools.

Surprisingly, teacher education institutions particularly the National Teacher Training College (NTTC) do not seem to have investigated the kinds of experiences that students are accumulating during their training. Yet, data generated through investigating students’ life in the college could inform teacher educators and administrators about the effects of such institutions on future teachers in many ways. Specifically, teacher educators in particular might find such information helping them improve their teaching approaches. This sub-study therefore sought to investigate student’ views on the experiences they are accumulating while undergoing training at the National Teacher Training College (NTTC).

1.2 Objectives

This sub-study is part of the Curriculum strand of MUSTER, which poses the overall question: *How do students acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become effective teachers?*

The research reported here focussed on how student teachers experience the curriculum during their time in college. In particular, it sought to investigate student perceptions about teaching and learning at the NTTC, their views of the course so far, their attitudes to the tutors and their peers, and their views about the teaching profession. It was hoped the answers might throw further light on what kinds of images of teaching such a programme presents, and how the teacher educators might be shaping future teachers through their interactions with them.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Population

In February 1999 a questionnaire was administered to the whole first year cohort of the Diploma in Education Primary (DEP) students. The original intention was to select a small but representative group from the cohort and monitor their experience through the first half of the programme. With this in mind, thirty-two (32) student teachers were initially selected using a stratified sampling technique. However, only twenty-seven agreed to participate in the study. In selecting the sample a number of factors were considered: their COSC grades (to ensure a wide range of performance standards), gender (one -third males and two-thirds females) and the location from which student teachers came (Highlands, lowlands, urban and rural).

These students were asked to write an essay about their perception of good and bad teachers. This data was analysed and the findings reported elsewhere (see Lefoka et al, forthcoming).

2.2 Instruments

For the next stage of the study, to be reported here, students were asked to keep a diary and to participate in focus group interviews. Since only 9 student teachers as opposed to twenty-seven submitted their diaries it was decided to administer a questionnaire (the 'Midway' survey - see appendix) to all the twenty-seven (27) student teachers. The intention was to supplement the data collected through diaries. However, only fourteen students responded to the questionnaire. This group appear slightly older than the average, (and perhaps had a more responsible attitude); the gender ratio of 10 women and 4 men is roughly proportional to that of the cohort as a whole.

2.3 Procedure

The initial plan whereby meetings would be held between the researcher and student teachers to guide the process of diaries was not fully adhered to. The major reason was the packed student lecture schedule. In the first place, they were never available as a whole group, secondly, they only had one free period in a week which they used for library purposes. As a result only two groups (10 plus in each group) as opposed to three participated in a focus group meeting. In the group interviews, students were given the following guidance for their diaries:

1. You have to try to recall as accurately as possible all the necessary details of required information;
2. Try to keep your diary up-to-date so that its strength is maintained;
3. Write down everything that seems interesting and or unusual that goes on in the College classrooms especially in the English, Mathematics, Science and Educational Foundation courses.

The diaries were kept during Semester 2 (September-November 1999)

After the students had been at the College for 18 months, the 'midway' questionnaire was prepared and students were gathered for the purpose of explaining to them how they were expected to fill it. Although almost all students attended this gathering, they were not prepared to fill the questionnaire there and then, and only 14 out of 27 questionnaires were returned.

CHAPTER 3

DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the diaries was studied, together with notes from the focus group meetings, and recurring themes were noted. The questionnaires were first analysed using SPSS to generate frequencies, and then a narrative account was written describing the patterns that emerged (the sample was too small for further statistical analysis). The answers to the open-ended questions were analysed manually and summarised. These three sets of data were then compared. Some of the themes and patterns could be related to the curriculum framework used to analyse the documented curriculum (see Lefoka and Stuart, 2001) but others emerged from the data.

The small size of the final sample makes it difficult to draw robust conclusions, but the data is rich and can contribute some insights into the curriculum process. This report also draws, in places, on data collected in other parts of the MUSTER work.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The first part of this section draws on the Curriculum analysis framework and considers a curricular strategy as comprising five interrelated parts: the aims and objectives, content, teaching/learning methods, resources and assessment. In the second part other themes are discussed.

4.1.1 Content of the curriculum as perceived by the students

Bridging course: The one-semester, pre-entry bridging course (Aug.-Nov. 1998) was highly valued by the students, with nearly half the respondents saying it should be lengthened. Diarists also commented positively on this part of the course, praising especially the introduction to ICT and the study/library skills courses. One summed it up as: *'The pre-entry course was very important to me'*.

Balance: A key issue in teacher education curriculum is the balance between the different components: subjects and methods, theory and practice. The survey data suggests that while most thought there was enough teaching about subject content, over half wanted more on subject methods. There was an even stronger feeling that the balance between theory and practice was unsatisfactory, with over two-thirds saying there was enough theory and they wanted more practical activity. At this point in the course they were very anxious to get into schools, and indicated that micro-teaching and teaching practice preparation should start earlier.

Asked how useful they found the different aspects of the course, the students put methods and education at the top of their lists:

Table 1: Usefulness of different aspects of the course

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>% ticking 'very useful'</i>	<i>No. ticking 'very useful'</i>
Subject methodology	93%	13
Education	71%	10
Subject content	57%	8
Project work	29%	4
Group activity work	23%	3

In one student's view, *professional studies is the most important subject because [it helps] student teachers apply the information that they've got'*. When asked what important new things they had learnt, many students quoted from the education courses. They mentioned skills ranging from lesson planning to handling chalk and facing an

audience. Theoretical topics included child development, the importance of reinforcement and motivation, and dealing with different kinds of children, including those with disabilities.

Asked what else should be included in the course, four thought computer education and three wanted more on teaching children with special needs. Others mentioned 'administration', career guidance, and more subject specialisation. At the same time, a couple queried the relevance of some subjects to the primary curriculum. This suggests they are more focussed on the professional preparation aspects of the course than on the academic content. The request for more ICT shows an awareness of the need for modern technology.

Appropriate Academic levels: Another important issue is whether the content is well matched to the students' needs and capabilities. This new Diploma course was designed specifically to raise the academic standards of primary teachers, but many of the first cohort did not have the desired minimum qualifications and some had not done all of the core subjects in high school. There is evidence that some of them were finding some of the work quite hard. In the survey, only 60% said lessons were easy to understand. Certainly they found the exams much harder than school level. Science appeared to give particular problems:

My Physics tutor assumes we all know about physics and does not consider that some have not done science at all.

Maths, Sesotho and R.E. were also mentioned as problematic. One student was clearly floundering when s/he wrote of an R.E. assignment: *'I did not understand what was really wanted'*. One wonders how many other students are in this position.

Student need for support in Science and maths was confirmed by the survey, where students were asked whether the core subjects needed more or less time.

Table 2: Subjects requiring more time

<i>Subject</i>	<i>% of respondents ticking 'much more' + 'more' time needed</i>	<i>Numbers of respondents</i>
Science	79%	11
Mathematics	64%	9
Education	50%	7
English	43%	6

A diary comment amplified this need for more time in science:

Physics and chemistry needs understanding and enough time which is not there.

A fairly similar pattern emerges from the response to the question 'Which parts of the course are most easy and most difficult?'

Table 3: Difficulty of selected aspects of the course

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Very easy</i>	<i>Easy</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Very difficult</i>
Project work	-	25%	50%	25%
Science content	-	38%	46%	15%
Education	8%	54%	23%	15%
Subject methodology		61%	38%	-
Maths content	15%	46%	38%	-
English		92%	8%	-

It is interesting that so few students wanted more time on English and that some thought it easy. Their level of written English, as revealed in the diaries, was, with one exception, far below that needed for teachers using it as a medium of instruction. Tutors considered the low level of English as a major barrier to higher achievement (Stuart et al, 2000). Only one student seemed aware of this lack, describing a scripture union meeting held in English for the sake of foreign participants:

What was embarrassing was that not a single student from NTTC participated [in the discussions]. They only showed interest when Sesotho was used.

Overload: It was clear from the diaries that the timetable was very crowded; students went from one class to another with little time to study on their own, except for the occasional revision lesson:

[there are] too many subjects to be done in a short time, and we are expected to pass them.

They also complained that assignments were badly spaced:

There is too much work to do now... each tutor gives us work ... [thinking] it is the only one to be done

This is consistent with other evidence (*Ibid*) that departments work in isolation with each other and that there is little overall coordination of the curriculum by senior management.

4.1.2 Teaching and Learning as perceived by students

Students' perceptions of the subject may have been influenced by different ways in which the subjects were taught. English and Mathematics seem to have been rated highest while opinion was divided over science and education. Commenting on the English lecturer, one student wrote:

I would like to congratulate our English tutor. She is always there to help us – so much that we feel a little bit superior.

The Mathematics lecturer was said to be hardworking and in the view of one student opinion also effective in that:

She is giving us a lot of work for practice. This is very essential for the people who do not know maths, especially who did not get enough maths background. The pace helps us all to be at the same stage... I used to hate Mathematics, at least there is a big difference compared to my high school...

In science, some students were clearly experiencing learning difficulties. They expressed concern about understanding concepts. One student reported:

...in physics classes I go out with little understanding of the topic, he (lecturer) is in a hurry...

The Physics lecturer was not able to demonstrate and/or use a 'pacing' skill.

Few students mentioned 'pedagogic content knowledge' which would help them to teach the subject at primary level. One exception was an English tutor who *'sang many songs for children and made us imitate her'*.

Evidence from classroom observations suggests that the most common teaching methods are lecture, question and answer, and group work. Student diaries in general were rather vague about what actually goes on, but showed how they enjoy chances to participate:

The education class was also lively, but we were somehow noisy, and the teacher wanted to see how much we understand about types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. We were arguing until she concludes what is right.

It may be that the education tutors model discussion methods more frequently than the subject tutors, since another wrote:

In the psychology lesson, an argument on how to close a lesson was sparked by the hints on micro-teaching. The tutor was able to allow participation on the part of trainees to share their viewpoints.

The one method frequently mentioned was group work. Some commented that it allowed them to participate and put their viewpoint (education) or that it gave them opportunities to practice (maths) but several were less enthusiastic. Analysis of these comments, as well as classroom observations, tends to suggest that there was no proper guidance in relation to group work. One student complained about a Sesotho lesson:

She didn't clarify [sic] what she really wants, she sent us back to our group but we still failed to get the answer until she tells us.

On several occasions students were left on their own. For example, one student wrote:

We were doing groupwork, and the teacher left us to proceed with the work. We quarrelled until we end up doing nothing. This made me feel uneasy for I want to understand how to do lesson plan format myself.

And of a subsequent lesson:

A member of our group presented a lesson plan– the member did not include our input and had left [out] some of what had to be included in the lesson plan format

Some of the problems experienced by students appeared to be caused by lack of time, or by poor planning and organisation. For example, they indicated that the Educational lecturer did not provide sufficient time for them to practice how to draw up a lesson plan. One student in writing about lesson planning had this to say:

Micro-teaching is introduced and a lesson plan is also expected. The only problem is that we practised a lesson plan once last semester and doing it in our groups. The second time when we are going to deal with it, is the time when marks will be recorded. We needed at least three to four times to practice.

An interesting perspective on teaching problems came out of the focus group discussion, where students said that afternoon lessons were not effective because students tended to sleep after eating a heavy lunch, particularly when lecturers did not involve students in activities – this was indeed confirmed by the observations.

4.1.3 Assessment

Assessment is one of the key components of the curriculum strategy and often has a disproportionate effect on it. The DEP curriculum states that the students shall be assessed by a combination of continuous and final assessment and the curriculum document recommends many types of assignments. We do not have examples of assignments actually given, but according to the survey responses education gives the widest variety, including project work; English gives essays, tests and a group project; maths uses mainly tests with some project work, and in science students write reports on experiments as well as doing tests and the occasional essay.

Student said that they prefer assignments to examinations and they agree that college tests can be passed by memory. About two-thirds of the survey respondents considered the assessment was 'fair', and three-quarters of them said that assignments are usually marked and returned. Students are naturally concerned about assessment, but some complaints from the diaries indicate that some of the tutors' habits leave much to be desired.

For example, one student wrote as follows:

...our tutor entered the class somehow rude – did not listen to anyone, gave a test we did not know about and/or which we were not prepared – we do not want to be

treated like little kids/pupils in primary school. Even those are informed about test dates.

Science seems to be particularly problematic. One student complained that the biology tutor had told them to revise the wrong things for the exam. In another case, 70 students failed a physics test, but the tutor took some of the blame on himself for including extra topics and allowed them to retake the test.

On the other hand, according to one diarist, some students cheat on their project work:

The project was supposed to be done in this way. We were supposed to interview the primary school teachers on the system that is being used in terms of grouping and teaching methods that are used. It seemed as if some of the students did not go outside and gather the information. They just used the books and the notes that were given before and then writing in such a way that it would appear as if they interviewed some of the people because the names of the schools as well as those of people interviewed were there. In other cases, one essay appeared to have been written by more than two people.

One might also question whether students had been given enough guidance to know how to carry out research. Observation of classes where this topic was taught suggests too much ground was covered too quickly, leaving the students confused. They say project work is difficult, but it may be they have not been shown how to work in this way. Coming straight from high school, students may need more guidance and supervision undertake independent study of this kind.

Organisation and timing of assignments also create problems. The Arts and Crafts and Home Economics lecturers who both taught practical subjects did not seem to consult about the times for assigning students projects and as a result students were given projects that required extensive time to complete during the same period.

4.1.4 Teaching/learning materials and resources

The curriculum as documented provides lists of textbooks and other reference materials. Understandably, teaching and learning materials does make teaching easier. The National Teacher Training College library is well resourced compared to other institutions in Lesotho, particularly the university library, and has a good selection of reference books on educational foundations. Survey responses confirm this, but indicate that students do want more resources, mainly in the form of primary school textbooks, syllabi and teaching guides. Observations revealed that students seldom use textbooks in class, having to rely on photocopied handouts given by the lecturers.

Some of the practical subjects did not seem to be well resourced, and the survey indicated a perceived need for more labs and specialist rooms for art and domestic science.

4.1.5 Improvements Suggested by Students

The responses to the survey question: 'Which of these would improve your course?' provide interesting information, which can be compared with findings from the other studies. The main difference is that at this point they want more time in schools, whereas by the end of the (old PTC) course, they felt TP had been adequately long.

Table 4: Ranking improvements needed by Importance

<i>Topic</i>	<i>% ticking Very Important and Important</i>	<i>Ticking No importance</i>
More time working in school	100%	-
More teaching on subject content	100%	-
More textbook	93%	-
More teaching on methodology	93%	-
More time to prepare for examinations	86%	7%
Smaller teaching group	85%	-
More notes from tutors	69%	-
More group work activity	64%	7%
More time to study on my own	64%	14%

The students seem anxious to do more practical work in schools, and they want more subject content, more methods and more textbooks. Smaller teaching groups seem less salient for them than for their tutors. In view of the overload, it seems surprising that relatively few think more study time is important, but this perhaps confirms the evidence from the tutors that they are not yet confident of their ability to work on their own.

Asked what would help them do better on assignments, nine out of 14 chose 'better spacing' and eight said 'better teaching'. The responses seem critical both of the teaching itself and the way it is organised.

Students also indicated in several places that more tutors were needed, in particular for the bridging course and for practical subjects.

4.2 Other themes

The next section deals with the student perceptions on more general issues of college relationships, the impact of the course so far, and their views of the teaching profession.

4.2.1 Views About the Lecturers

Two kinds of comments about lecturers emerge from the data. Those relating mainly to their teaching styles and methods were reported above, where it was shown that while some match their teaching to the students' needs, others do not. The second set of comments concerns the tutors' personal and professional relationships with students.

Of the 21 recorded views about lecturers in the diaries, 17 were negative. It appears that not all lecturers are acting as good role models. One student wrote:

My only problem is...the teacher is not practising what she is preaching. She used to tell us that motivation could be used to encourage pupils on what they are doing. But she does not even give verbal motivation such as good when some of us give correct answers?

Some tutors appear not to encourage students, nor to show them respect, often exhibiting bad temper. For example, one of the students felt the tutor was at fault in not showing up to class but blamed students for the mistake:

The professional studies tutor became so angry with us saying we didn't bring his assignment on time yet on that day he did not come to class. He was so angry that he did not teach saying all sorts of things.

Such demotivating attitudes were reported as early as during the bridging course, where a student who was excited about practising using computers felt frustrated by the tutor who refused him the opportunity to do so.

Some tutors seem to treat students as children rather than as the young adults they are:

My home Economics tutor discouraged us a bit when she says she will not hesitate to chase us out of the class if we do something she does not like. For example, talking during her lesson

Another wrote about the Music Lecturer:

I started to realise that a tutor could be angry of what we were not aware of – he scolded us saying that we are like standard one pupil and that we could not sing.

In extreme cases lecturers are reported to use abusive language:

We were writing the final examination while two tutors responsible for invigilating insulted us saying we were possessed by Satan/evil – they wondered if we would pass the examination.

Survey data from this group and from the exiting cohort of PTC add a wider context to these views. Although their diary comments are critical, in the survey most of this group said they tutors were approachable, and two-thirds thought they were more friendly than strict, while only half said they were 'caring'. The exiting group (50+ respondents) were more negative. More than half (58%) thought the tutors were unapproachable, two-thirds saw them as strict rather than friendly, and again only half thought they were caring.

There are many signs that tutors do not always take their responsibilities as seriously as they should. Taking the two surveys together, between a third and a quarter of

respondents think tutors cannot be relied on to appear in class, or to mark and return work. Half say they are unpunctual. Evidence from the observations supports this.

There is even evidence of tutors engaging in commercial activities while teaching. One of the lecturers used jokes as a cover for advertising her business “herbal life products”, and students questioned the practice of using a lecture hall for selling purposes. Such comments raise serious questions about the tutors’ professional standards and behaviour.

4.2.2 Student Teachers’ Views about Other Students

In the diaries, student teachers’ views about other students were mainly negative, though one noted: *‘I cope well with my colleagues’*. More frequently, cooperative work seemed a problem, as seen in the comments over groupwork related above. In addition, one noted:

Class [work] is not effective because we took a long time making a quarrel. It is at a time of professional studies when we made a quarrel. Roughly we take a whole period making a quarrel, so some of my group mates goes [sic] outside. I think the students who go outside are bored of listening to others quarrel.

Other concerns were about how new and old student teachers relate to one another. One student reported that:

...the administration and the students’ representative welcomed us very well, although the old students treated us harshly.

This needs to be seen alongside comments from the Entry Questionnaire, however. In the earlier survey, students appeared to value cooperation among their peers, and many mentioned ‘social life’ among the benefits of college life. It is not clear why the views of this particular small group are so negative.

4.2.3 Student views of management

There was little in the diaries directly about this. One student expressed pleasure about the party given by the Director. Another complained about the accounts office:

The service they provided us is not good at all. We are only allowed to pay fees on Tuesdays but when we arrive there, they serve us as if they are doing us a favour.

Implicitly, their complaints about overload and poor organisation of work suggests that the management is not closely in touch with student problems.

4.2.4 Impact of the course so far

Most students seem to have accepted the “progressive” pedagogy of the college, in that all agree children learn best in small groups, and that teachers can improve the results of

slow learners. While most think children learn from asking questions, three-quarters agree that teaching facts is the most important thing to do. On the issue of corporal punishment, they seem to be divided with most of them thinking that it doesn't help children learn, but half think it is difficult to keep discipline without it. These responses to the Likert items (see appendix for details) reveal little difference from those they gave a year earlier.

When asked in the survey to write down two important new things they had learned, many of the responses indicated in one way or another a new awareness or insight into the teacher's role, such as:

I realised that teaching is not just to stand and speak; many skills are needed for teaching

Some said that they realised that teaching is difficult and/or entails hard work:

To be a teacher needs more time and effort....

A more cheerful view was that:

teaching is enjoyable and interesting and such a great challenge to one's life.

Asked whether or not their ideas on teaching had changed, less than half said yes. Of the six comments made, five were about new insights into how tough and challenging a task it is:

having thought teaching is simple and less challenging task, I have come to realise that it is not, because to change somebody's mind is not a joke as it requires a lot of skills, teaching involves many tiring activities that need a special attention to deal with.

A more idealistic view appeared just once. One student wrote:

I have learnt that teaching is helping one to study and not giving out what has been studied; also that the pride of teaching does not live in the salary that one earns in the month but in every little achievement that the pupils show.

In general, students seem to be 'learning the discourse' and becoming more aware of the complexity of teaching, as well as the need for hard work, planning and preparation.

4.2.5. Career intentions

In spite of their complaints, the students said they were glad to be at the college and still wanted to be teachers. Some simply expressed general satisfaction about the course:

It has improved my standard of education and knowledge so far

Others stressed the advantages of a Diploma:

[It is] different from PTC in... that our route is wide open to universities. It is not a matter of must to be a primary teacher, one [can] be a career councilor or an education officer.

Nearly all (11 out of 14) agreed that the course has made them more enthusiastic about being a teacher although one was less keen and two said they feel the same. In the survey, only 2 (14%) say that they would rather have gone to university, while nearly all agree that teaching is the best job they can get, that teachers are respected and that friends think they are fortunate. However, nearly half say that they know many teachers who would prefer to be doing something else. Only 3 (21%) say they would rather teach at secondary level.

This evidence is consistent with the data from the other surveys, which found that most respondents intended to remain in the teaching profession, a large majority of them saying they would teach at Primary rather than Secondary level. However, most of them also said they would like to further their studies. This group, with their Diplomas, may not be so content to remain in the primary schools, as indicated by the quote above.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This is a very small sample and we should be wary of drawing too many firm conclusions from it. The evidence comes mainly from student written data – the survey and diaries – and had there been more time to conduct individual and/or focus group interviews a clearer picture might have emerged. However, the findings of the companion studies confirm the general direction of the results. Together they present a quite worrying picture of how some students are experiencing the DEP curriculum and, if substantiated, call for some serious rethinking of the curriculum and of how it is taught.

The following are some of the main points emerging:

- On the whole, students are pleased to be at the college and say they still intend to be primary teachers. The overall impact of the course so far has been to make them aware of the complexity of the teacher's task and of the hard work involved. It does not appear to have had much effect on their attitudes towards teaching in general.
- Consistent with these expressed career intentions, they value most what they are learning in the professional components of the course and would like this aspect of the curriculum to be enhanced. Midway through the course, they feel they have not had enough practical experience in, or relevant to, the primary schools.
- They valued the bridging course, but in spite of that chance to upgrade their subject knowledge and study skills, many are finding the academic aspects quite difficult, and struggle to understand, especially in Science. One reason may be their relatively poor English language skills, and another their lack of good study habits and skills.
- Good teaching is shown in some cases to help them overcome their difficulties, maths being a positive example. But in too many subjects the teaching seems uninspired, and not matched to their needs, either as college students or as future primary teachers. This is borne out by the classroom observations.
- Teacher educators should be able to demonstrate different teaching strategies and show how these can be applied flexibly, but this does not seem to be happening much. In particular, students are not taught how to work in groups. This means it is unlikely they will in turn be able to use this method fruitfully in schools. Very few tutors are modelling the styles of teaching that should be used in primary classrooms.
- There is a gap here between the rhetoric and the practice. Both the aims of the curriculum, and the expressed views of tutors (Stuart et al, 2000) indicate a learner-centred approach. But there is little evidence from this study, or from the classroom observations, that tutors are 'getting to the level of the student', 'taking account of

individual differences', or 'helping those with difficulties'. By the same token, students are not learning to solve problems, or to become creative and reflective practitioners. Examples of professional reflection in the diaries are very rare.

- Assessment practices are not satisfactory from a number of angles. There seems a good variety of continuous assessment methods used, but coordination between subjects is lacking, and tests and tasks are often set at the same time. This results in further stress for students, and probably in poorer achievement.
- More seriously, the anecdote about handing in phoney research papers suggests a climate of cheating. Informal discussion with tutors suggests that students often copy even in exams. The fact that the University Senate has returned exam results several times because of the highly skewed distribution of marks is further evidence. It is not clear whether such irregularities come from the lack of responsibility on the part of students only, or whether tutors also connive in such practices.
- Physical resources appear to be largely adequate at the college, though students still complain about the facilities. Other studies confirm that students do not use enough textbooks in class, nor do they have access to primary school materials. For some parts of the course there do not seem to be enough tutors.
- The curriculum as a whole seems overloaded, compartmentalised and somewhat out of date; students have little study time and little tutorial support while doing their many assignments. A more slimmed down and focussed curriculum, with more attention paid to individual student needs, especially in language and study skills, and with remedial help available in core subjects, might raise student morale, and perhaps make them more ready and willing to cooperate with each other as well.
- One of the saddest findings from this study is that students' perceptions of many tutors are quite negative, though there are honourable exceptions. The evidence here suggests some tutors are poor role models not only in teaching but also in nurturing and supporting student teachers through a difficult and demanding curriculum. Some tutors' standards of punctuality, courtesy, caring, responsibility and professional ethics leave much to be desired. One wonders how far the students will internalise these models and eventually reproduce them in their jobs.

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Appendix 1: Lesotho Midway Likert Items

<i>Statements</i>	<i>% Agreement</i>
1. School children learn best when in small groups	100%
2. The most important thing a teacher can do is teach pupils facts that they need to know	71.5%
3. Teachers cannot do much to improve the results of slow learners	0%
4. All you need to do well on college tests is good memory	85.8%
5. School pupils learn more from listening to the teacher than from asking questions.	21.4%
6. Teachers find it difficult to maintaining discipline in school without corporal punishment.	50%
7. Doing well in college examination is easier than doing well at secondary school	28.6%
8. I think it will be easy to use new teaching methods in my school	57.1%
9. Children need to be divided into ability groups to be taught well	71.5%
10. I prefer being assessed through assignments than through end-of term examination	78.6%
11. I find it difficult to make teaching and learning aids	14.3%
12. corporal punishment is not useful for helping children to learn	78.6%
13. After teaching lessons in school I write down how to improve next time	100%
14. Examinations are a fair test of what I have learnt at college	71.4%
15. There is no time in school for teachers to plan lessons well	0%
16. People who are good teachers do not need much training	14.3%
17. My friends think I am fortunate to be a schoolteacher	85.7%
18. I feel well prepared to start teaching now	50%
19. Women make the best primary school principals	64.3%
20. Teaching is easier than many other jobs I could do	21.4%
21. I need more training to be an effective teacher	92.9%
22. Teachers are born not made	42.9%
23. Teaching is a very difficult job to do well	42.9%
24. I would rather teach in a secondary school than a primary school.	21.4%
25. Men make the best primary school class teachers	35.7%
26. I would rather have gone to university than teacher training college	14.3%
27. I think being a teacher is the best job I can get	85.7%
28. Primary school teachers are respected by the community	85.7%
29. I know many teachers who would prefer to do other jobs	42.9%

Appendix 2: Mid-Way Questionnaire

Dear Student

You have kindly helped us in various ways with this research project in the training of teachers. Now you are about halfway through your Diploma in Education Primary, we are interested in how you find your course. We would be most grateful if you would answer the questions below as fully as you can. All the information will be kept confidential.

About yourself

1. Your student number
2. Your Age in years
3. (Please tick your gender) Female () Male ()

Section A: The Curriculum

Please think about your experience of the college courses so far, and answer the following questions by ticking or entering a number in the relevant box.

1. Semester One

Your first semester comprised a bridging course in the main subjects. What did you think about it? Please give your opinion by ticking the box below.

It should be increased	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It should stay the same length	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It should be decreased	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is unnecessary and should be abolished	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How is teaching organised?

Think back to last week (or the last week of full teaching) and fill in the following to show what kinds of teaching you had in the main subjects:

	English	Maths	Science	Education	
Lectures					<input type="checkbox"/>
Small group discussion with tutors (less than 15 students)					<input type="checkbox"/>
Large group class discussions with tutors (more than 15 students)					<input type="checkbox"/>
Group Work Activity					<input type="checkbox"/>
Observation in schools					<input type="checkbox"/>
Micro teaching					<input type="checkbox"/>
Project work					<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Amount of time

Do you think the time available for different subjects should be more or less than it is now?

	Much more time	More time	The same	Less time	Much less time	
Maths						<input type="checkbox"/>
Science						<input type="checkbox"/>
English						<input type="checkbox"/>
Education						<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Practice Preparation						<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Practice Micro-teaching						<input type="checkbox"/>
Other subjects (please specify)						<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Theory and Practice

Is the balance between theory and practice on the course appropriate? Please tick

	Needs more time	About right	Needs less time	
Theory				<input type="checkbox"/>
Practical Activity				<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Content and methods

Is the balance between subject content and subject methods on the course appropriate? Please tick.

	Needs more time	About right	Needs less time	
Methods				<input type="checkbox"/>
Content				<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Usefulness to trainee teachers

How useful do you rate the different kinds of courses? Please tick.

	Very Useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not Useful	
Subject Content					<input type="checkbox"/>
Subject Methodology					<input type="checkbox"/>
Education					<input type="checkbox"/>
Micro-teaching					<input type="checkbox"/>
Group Activity Work					<input type="checkbox"/>
Project Work					<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Ease or Difficulty

Which parts of the course are most easy and most difficult? Please Tick

	Very Easy	Easy	Difficult	Very Difficult	
English content					
Maths content					
Science content					
Education					
Subject Methodology					
Micro-teaching					
Project work					

8. Improvements needed

What would improve your course most? Please tick

	Very important	Important	Minor importance	No importance	
More teaching on subject content					
More teaching on methodology					
Smaller teaching groups					
More time to prepare for end of year examinations					
More time to study on my own					
More notes from tutors					
More textbooks					
More group work activity					
More time working in schools					

9. Are there any other things that should be included in the training course?

If yes, state what should be included.

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. Teaching quality

Please comment on the quality of the teaching on the course by ticking below

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	
English					
Maths					
Science					
Education					
Preparation for teaching practice					

11. Describing your tutors

Place a tick in the boxes that apply to your tutors.

For example, in the first row of boxes about whether tutors know their subject well:

if you think tutors know their subject *well* tick under 1

if you think they know it *quite well*, tick under 2

if you think they are *quite weak*, tick under 3

and if they are *weak*, tick under 4.

Please read each pair of statements very carefully before ticking.

Generally tutors in this college:

	1	2	3	4		
Know subject well					Weak in the subject	
Often link theory to practice in schools					Rarely link theory to practice in schools.	
Rarely encourage small group work					Encourage small group work	
Always mark and return students work					Never mark students work	
Are Strict					Are Friendly	
Are Approachable					Are Unapproachable	
Are Uncaring					Are Caring	
Teach only theory					Emphasise Practical work	
Fair in assessment					Unfair in assessment	
Are often late					Are always on time	
Are there to teach all required lessons					Are often absent from teaching	
Lessons are relevant to learning to teach					Often irrelevant to learning to teach	
Lessons are Confusing					Lessons are easy to understand	

11. Assessment

These are the continuous assessment activities suggested by the syllabus for the end of modules. Think back over this term about which of these you have been given in each subject. Please enter the number of times in the relevant box. If none, put 0.

	English	Maths	Science	Education	
Essay (500 words)					
Essay (1000 words)					
Report on experiment					
Class-based test					
Library-based test					
Take home test					
Open book test					
Mini project					
Group project					
Major project					
Other (please describe)					

12. Improving your grades

What would help you do better on assessments? Please tick whichever is applicable

More time for revision		
Better teaching		
Better notes		
More study time		
Better spacing of assignments		
More textbooks		
Other (please specify)		

13. Resources

Does the library have enough books and other material?

	Much more needed	More needed	Enough	
Subject course books				
Primary school textbooks				
Reference books				
Education books				

14 Your wish-list

If the college was given M. 100,000 (one hundred thousand Maloti) what would you advise the Director to spend it on?

.....
.....
.....

Section B

Please answer the following as fully as you can. If there is not enough space use the back of the page.

Your Student Number:

1. Write down two important new things you have learnt about teaching since coming to the college

a).....
.....

b).....

2. Have any of your ideas about teaching changed? YES / NO (please circle)

If you circled YES, please explain how your ideas have changed:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3. What are the best things about this course?

.....
.....
.....

3. What are the worst things about this course?

.....
.....
.....

5. Please tick which of the following statements best describes your feelings:

The course has made me less keen to be a teacher	
The course has made me more enthusiastic about teaching	
I feel just the same about wanting to be a teacher as when I started	

SECTION C:

In this section, please place a tick in only one box for each question

6. School children learn best when in small groups.
- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
7. The most important thing a teacher can do is teach pupils facts that they need to know.
- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
9. Teachers cannot do much to improve the results of slow learners
- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
10. All you need to do well on College tests is a good memory
- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
11. School pupils learn more from listening to the teacher than from asking questions
- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. Teachers find it difficult to maintain discipline in schools without corporal punishment.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
13. Doing well in College examinations is easier than doing well at secondary school
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
14. I think it will be easy to use new teaching methods in my school
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
15. Children need to be divided into ability groups to be taught well
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
16. I prefer being assessed through assignments than through end-of-term examinations
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
17. I find it difficult to make teaching and learning aids.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
18. Corporal punishment is not useful for helping children to learn
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

19. After teaching lessons in school I write down how to improve next time
 Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
20. Examinations are a fair test of what I have learnt at College
 Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
21. There is no time in school for teachers to plan lessons well
 Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
22. People who are good teachers do not need much training
 Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
23. My friends think I am fortunate to be a schoolteacher
 Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
24. I feel well prepared to start teaching now
 Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
25. Women make the best primary school principals
 Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree
26. Teaching is easier than many other jobs I could do.
 Strongly agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

27.	I need more training to be an effective teacher	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
28.	Teachers are born not made.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
29.	Teaching is a very difficult job to do well	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
30.	I would rather teach in a secondary school than a primary school.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
31.	Men make the best primary school class teachers.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
32.	I would rather have gone to University than Teacher Training College	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
33.	I think being a teacher is the best job I can get.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
34.	Primary school teachers are respected by the community	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

35. I know many teachers who would prefer to do other jobs.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

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