

# M U S T E R

Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project

sponsored by DFID



**Discussion Paper**

**28**

Who Becomes a Primary  
School Teacher in Lesotho:  
Characteristics and Experiences  
of the DEP Student Teachers upon  
Entry into NTTC

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**Cie**

## **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.

Financial support has been provided for three years by the British Department for International Development (DFID).

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.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Acronyms</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
1.0 Rationale	2
1.1 The Purpose of the study	3
1.2 Research Questions	3
1.3 Theoretical Context	3
<b>Chapter 2: Research Design And Methods</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 The research design	5
2.2 Target Population	5
2.3 Data-collection methods	5
2.4 Selection of the samples	6
2.5 Data collection procedure	6
<b>Chapter 3: Data Analysis And Interpretation</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Age	7
3.2 Gender	7
3.3 Denominational Affiliation	7
3.4 Occupation and Educational Qualification of Parents of Student Teachers	8
3.5 Location of Schools and Years of Attendance of Primary school	9
3.6 Number of years in School	10
3.7 Performance at Post-Primary School	10
3.8 Teaching Experience	11
3.9 Perceptions of Student teachers about primary schooling	12
3.10 Images of primary school teachers	14
3.11 Future Plans and Expectations	18
3.12 Life in the College	19
3.13 Becoming a teacher	21
3.14 Challenges Facing the Teaching Profession and Possible Changes in Education	23
3.15 Views about teaching and related issues	24
<b>Chapter 4: Conclusion</b>	<b>34</b>
4.1 Student teachers' background	34
4.2 Images of teachers	35
4.3 The Future	37
<b>References</b>	<b>39</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Religious Affiliation	8
Table 2: Parents' Educational Qualification	9
Table 3: Districts where Respondents Attended Primary School	9
Table 4: Number of Years Student Teachers Spent in school	10
Table 5: Pass symbols at JC in English, Mathematics and Science Examination	11
Table 6: Pass symbol at COSC in English, Mathematics and Science Examination	11
Table 7: Whether Respondents Taught Between Leaving School and Coming to NTTC	12
Table 8: Best Things about Primary Schooling	12
Table 9: Characteristics of Good Teachers	14
Table 10: Student-Teachers Responses to the Question of bad and disliked teachers	16
Table 11: Type of teacher student teachers would like to be	18
Table 12: Reasons for studying in teacher education	19
Table 13: Reasons for Stating that Life at the College is Good	20
Table 14: Advantages of Becoming a Teacher	21
Table 15: Career Ambitions and Expectations	23
Table 16: Level of agreement with the statement "Teachers are born not made" by Gender	25
Table 17: Opinion on the statement "I would rather have gone to university than teacher training College" by gender	25
Table 18: Opinion on the Statement "I would rather teach in secondary school than primary school" by Gender	26
Table 19: Opinion on the Statement "Teaching is a very difficult job to do well" by gender	27

Table 20:Opinion on the Statement “Teaching Experience is more important than educational qualifications in Appointing Head Teachers”	27
Table 21: Opinion on the Statement “Teachers have more status than other professionals” by gender	28
Table 22:Opinion on the Statement “Children centred teaching tends to lower educational standards” by whether or not they taught before	28
Table 23: Statement “My Friends think I am fortunate to be training to be a teacher” by geographical location	29
Table 24: Opinion on the Statement “When I qualify as a teacher I should be able to teach where I like” by location of district	29
Table 25: Opinion on the Statement that “Teachers cannot do much to improve the academic performance of low achieving students” by whether or not respondents taught before coming to NTTC	30
Table 26: Extent to which respondents agree that “young teachers have better ideas about teaching than old teachers” by age groups	30
Table 27: Opinion on the Statement “The most important thing a teacher can do is to teach pupils facts that they need to know” by whether or not respondents taught before entering college	31
Table 28: Opinion on the Statement “School pupils learn more from listening to the teacher than from asking questions” by whether or not taught before entering the College.	31
Table 29: Opinion on the Statement “Primary pupils cannot understand English so teachers have to use Sesotho” by whether taught before entering teacher training.	32
Table 30: Opinion on the Statement “Corporal punishment should be available in school” by whether or not respondents taught before.	32
Table 31: Opinion on the statement “Pupils need to be divided into ability groups to be taught well” by whether or not respondents taught before	33
Table 32: Opinion on the Statement “Teacher education should involve at least a year’s teaching practice” by whether or not the respondent has taught before	33

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 3.1 : Ages of student teachers

7

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ACL	Anglican Church of Lesotho
COSC	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
DEP	Diploma in Education (Primary)
JC	Junior Certificate
LEC	Lesotho Evangelical Church
NTTC	National Teacher Training College
PTC	Primary Teacher Certificate
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
STC	Secondary Teacher Certificate

## **ABSTRACT**

This study focussed on the characteristics of the first cohort of student teachers who entered the National Teacher Training College in Lesotho to take the Diploma in Education (Primary), and used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. A questionnaire collected data on their backgrounds and experience, along with their perceptions and expectations of teaching and the teaching profession. A smaller sample of students wrote autobiographical essays about their memories of primary school. The findings show, *inter alia*, that most students are female, most come from relatively humble backgrounds and very few have good grades at COSC. They bring with them powerful memories and images of primary schooling, mostly of a traditional kind, which seem likely to persist in their own practice. It is suggested that the College must recognise more clearly what kinds of students are recruited, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and what they bring with them, so that the curriculum can be designed to acknowledge their ideas and perceptions while also working to challenge and change them.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This is a report on one of the MUSTER<sup>1</sup> sub-studies focusing on entry characteristics of the Diploma in Education (Primary) (DEP) student teachers. The study aimed at finding out the characteristics of new teachers. It was undertaken in the very early days of the DEP students' entry into the College. It was assumed that student teachers' opinions and/or perceptions on a number of issues investigated in this study had not been affected much by the College teaching at that time.

### 1.0 Rationale

The National Teacher Training College (NTTC) compiles data on the background of students it admits into its programmes. The data is drawn from academic certificates submitted by applicants as well as from information provided by the applicants during interviews conducted prior to admission. This data might serve various purposes for which it is intended. For example, from the collected data, the College should be in a position to monitor students' performance basing itself on, among other things, whether or not a particular student entered with high or low grades. The idea of collecting information on student characteristics seems to be a step in the right direction.

However, the data collected is not comprehensive enough to use for purposes other than administrative ones. For example, more often than not, particularly in the Lesotho context, it is common to have in a group of applicants two categories: (a) those who have a teaching experience and (b) some without such an experience. Additionally, a known fact is that prospective teachers enter training colleges with some idea about life in a school classroom. Data focusing on experiences among other things does not seem to form part of the data currently collected at the NTTC. Such information, if properly documented and made available to teacher educators and prospective teachers themselves in a refined manner, could be used in the college for many purposes. Most importantly, through investigating entry characteristics regularly, the College will gain knowledge about the trainees it deals with and that knowledge can be used in informing the planning of programmes and at classroom level too.

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<sup>1</sup> MUSTER (Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project) is a collaborative project co-ordinated from the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex Institute of Education, UK. Financial support for the three year project was provided by the British Department for International Development (DFID).

## **1.1 The Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the entry characteristics of new teacher trainees into teacher training in terms of prior experiences about teachers and teaching, attitudes held towards and/or perceptions about teachers and teaching, their motivational levels to become teachers and their future intentions about teaching. Furthermore, the study was designed to lead to an understanding of how these characteristics are related to the trainees' own cultural context.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The study aimed at answering the following questions:

- (a) What are the academic and professional qualifications brought by the students into teacher training?
- (b) What are the prospective teachers' perceptions of "a teacher"?
- (c) What images of teachers and primary schooling do new entrants bring to teacher education programmes?
- (d) What relevant experiences do student teachers bring into teacher education?
- (e) What are the student teachers' future plans?

## **1.3 Theoretical Context**

Much concern has been raised from different quarters, regarding how beginning teachers are socialised into teaching. As observed by Bullough, Knowles and Crow (1991) some reviews of the teacher socialisation literature indicate that there is inadequate information about the actual process of socialisation in the pre-service training period. However, those who have written about teacher education focusing on issues of socialisation raise a number of issues on this topic.

One of these issues is alluded to by Feiman-Nemser (1990). The author argues that the concept "learning to teach", is mainly understood through the different ongoing processes and practices that revolve around the teacher's training and later his/her teaching life. No direct definition of the topic exists so far, except through piecing together facts from a variety of the processes of learning how to teach. Feiman-Nemser further suggests that before teachers start their formal pedagogical work, they have already had considerable informal preparation for teaching. The argument being posed here is that early life experiences and influences from parents and teachers have a great effect on shaping people into becoming teachers, and that education has little power "to overcome the impact of early experiences". In agreement with Feiman-Nemser (1990), Calderhead (1987) says student teachers often have fixed conceptions of what teaching is, a situation that might influence what they gain from their professional experiences.

Another issue concerns those who join the teaching profession. They are those who might have been pushed into the profession due to circumstances such as not getting admission in first place of their choice. Ball and Godson (1985) refer to this group as “wanderers”. They state that once in college, such teachers eventually earn a qualification that is non-negotiable, hence they end up teaching. They continue to say “some of these wanderers” finally drop off, while others undoubtedly acquire a more positive orientation to their role as teachers. They find satisfactions in new challenges or new aspects of their work or, in relationship with colleagues. Thus, two groups or more might emerge out of those who join teaching by default: the group that will remain committed to teaching and that which might opt out of the profession. Sugrue (1993) observes that identification with teaching as a profession is an important first step for intending student teachers. Such identification is particularly important when primary teachers continue to enjoy social status and respect within the community, particularly in rural areas.

Therefore, even though people may land into teaching by mistake there is a strong belief that an individual has, in one way or another, been influenced to become a teacher through any one of the various life experiences. It is further believed that once people go for training and become teachers, there are opportunities for supporting them in their work of teaching. It is, therefore, up to formal teacher preparation institutions to modify their notions of teachers and teaching if they are to have any impact, since skills do have a place in teaching but they cannot replace ideas.

There is no doubt that the ideas that student teachers bring into teacher education programmes are valuable and that therefore they ought to be tapped by those who train teachers. These ideas might help teacher educators improve their delivery mode in that they can help students relate their learning at the college to the school situation. Unless these ideas, some of which might be good while others might be bad, are debated at the college level, they might remain with students even after they qualify from their training. The underlying message for engaging in student experiences and perception is to ensure that teacher education makes a difference. Otherwise, its impact will be hard to observe.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

#### 2.1 The research design

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to collect data for this study. These included a survey, interviews, and autobiographical essays.

#### 2.2 Target Population

The target population was the cohort of student teachers who had enrolled in the new Diploma in Education (DEP) programme in 1998. They were 104 in number. There was an intention to have a smaller group of student teachers to participate at a second level to provide more in-depth data. Moreover, views from the public were sought through representatives of parents of school-going children.

#### 2.3 Data-collection methods

Three instruments were used to collect data.

1. *Questionnaire.* A questionnaire was used to collect information on the entry characteristics of the new Diploma in Education (Primary) at the point of entry into the College. It had both closed and open-ended questions and was divided into three sections:

- Section A sought data on student biographical and social backgrounds, asking questions on gender, parents' educational background and occupations. It also asked for information on the student teachers' grades obtained in the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science at the Junior Certificate (JC) examination and at Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC).
- Section B sought their views on teaching, teacher education and schooling. Student teachers were to respond to a range of Likert-type statements, indicating the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the given statement. They were also invited to give reasons for their answers.
- Section C asked open-ended questions. For example, there were questions that required students to share their worst and best memories of primary schooling and of teachers who teach at this level.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested with the National University of Lesotho (NUL) first year education student teachers.

2. *Autobiographical essays:* In writing their autobiographies, student teachers were guided in that they were to respond to four questions. The first question sought factual information about their age, whether they taught before being admitted to the NTTC, and the primary schools they attended. The other questions challenged them to share their perceptions and/or views concerning the following (a) a good teacher that they liked most during their primary school education. (b) the worst teacher they came across during their primary schools education, and (c) they were to describe the kind of teacher they would like to be after graduating from the College.

3. *Interviews:* Semi-structured interviews were held with members of the Parents in Education Association.

## **2.4 Selection of the samples**

Although the plan was to involve all the DEP student teachers in the survey, only 90 out of the 104 were available at the time, and this became the sample. For the autobiographical essays, a stratified sample of 32 of these 90 survey respondents was chosen, after they had completed the questionnaire, using the following variables: high or low grades at COSC in mathematics, science and English, the location from which student teachers came, gender, age, and home district. Three members of the Parents in Education Association were purposively selected to participate in the study, on the assumption that their views would be representative of the wider public.

## **2.5 Data collection procedure**

Data collection focusing on student teachers was undertaken in two stages. In the first place, the questionnaire was administered to all the students available, in a lecture theatre during two teaching periods. For the second stage, the selected students were invited to write their autobiographical essays. Only 27 students responded, as some had transferred to another course.

## CHAPTER 3

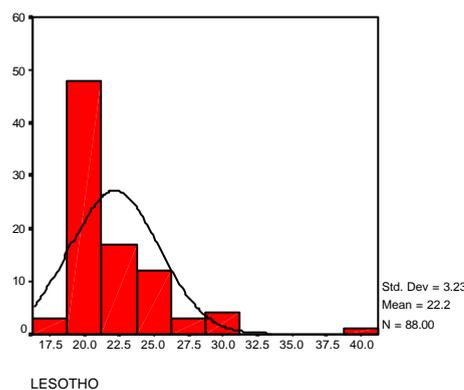
### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This Chapter presents findings based on data collected through the approaches described in Section 2.

#### 3.1 Age

The study indicates that the mean age of student teachers who participated in the study was 21 years old. The ages ranged from 18 – 30, but most were between 20 and 24.

**Figure 3.1** Ages of student teachers



#### 3.2 Gender

Responses to the question on student teachers' gender indicates that there were 64 females (71.1%) who enrolled in the DEP programme in 1998 and 26 (28.9%) males.

#### 3.3 Denominational Affiliation

A significant number of the Lesotho nationals is made up of Christians and a large number of schools belong to the churches. Of the student teachers who responded to the question on denominational affiliation, 36.7% were members of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), 33.3% were from the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC), and 15.6% belonged to the Lesotho Anglican Church (ACL) while the rest 14.4% were members of other churches. Table 1 presents the findings.

**Table 1: Religious Affiliation**

<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Roman Catholic Church (RCC)	33	36.7%
Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC)	30	33.3%
Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL)	14	15.6%
Other Churches	13	14.4%
Total	90	100%

### **3.4 Occupation and Educational Qualification of Parents of Student Teachers**

Student teachers were asked to indicate their parents' occupation and educational background.

#### *3.4.1 Occupation of Parents of Student teachers*

Of the student teachers who responded to the question indicating their parents' occupation, only 2.2% indicated that their fathers were teachers while 21.1% indicated that their fathers were farmers. The largest percentage (48.9%) did not respond to this question. When student gender was cross - tabulated with parents' work it was found that 51% female and 43% of males responded with "not applicable". Other responses revealed that a few fathers worked as mine workers (8.9%) while some were not working (4.4%). Others were civil servants (3.3%) and others still were drivers (2.2%). The last categories which constituted 1% each were those of labourer, soldier, businessman and carpenter.

Responding to the same question and focusing on mothers, responses indicated that their mothers were housewives (21.1%) while others reported that their mothers were employed as teachers (17.8%). Other than this, 35 (38.9%) student teachers did not respond to this question and 5 (5.6%) gave a "not applicable" response. A small percentage (5.5) of student teachers indicated their guardian rather than their parents.

#### *3.4.2 Educational qualification of student teachers' parents*

Student teachers were requested to indicate the level of education of their parents. Table 2 shows the various categories of parents, those who have some education and those who do not. According to this Table 24% of the mothers and 17% of the fathers had no education. Although the difference was not that big, more mothers compared to fathers had primary education (38%), secondary education (14%) and college education (16%). It may be assumed that most holders of college certificate/diploma are teachers. On the contrary, there were 3 fathers (3.3%) who held a university degree while none of the mothers had these academic credentials.

**Table 2: Parents' Educational Qualification**

Qualification	Father	Mother
Did not go to school	20 (24%)	15 (17%)
Primary school education	23 (27%)	33 (38%)
Junior Certificate	10 (12%)	12 (14%)
Cambridge Overseas School Certificate	5 (6%)	5 (6%)
College Certificate/Diploma	3 (3.5%)	14 (16%)
University degree	3 (3.5%)	0
Not applicable	20 (24%)	8 (9%)
Total number of respondents	84 (100%)	87 (100%)

### 3.5 Location of Schools and Years of Attendance of Primary school

The question on the location of schools in which student teachers obtained their primary education was divided into two categories with the first one focusing on the district and the second on ecological zone. Table 3 shows that overall, most student teachers came from schools in three out of the ten Lesotho districts. These were Maseru (25.5%), Leribe (19%) and Mafeteng (17%). The college had admitted very few student teachers from other districts.

**Table 3: Districts where Respondents Attended Primary School**

District	Frequency	Percent
Maseru	23	25.5%
Leribe	17	19%
Mafeteng	15	17%
Quthing	8	9%
Berea	6	7%
Mohale' Hoek	6	7%
Mokhotlong	5	5.5%
Thaba-Tseka	5	5.5%
Qacha's Nek	3	3.3%
Butha-Buthe	2	2.2%
Total no of respondents	90	100%

On the issue of ecological zones, student teachers were asked to indicate whether their primary schools were in the foothills, lowlands or mountain locations. Responses indicated that overall, student teachers who were admitted into the DEP programme had attended schools in the lowland regions.

### 3.6 Number of years in School

Student teachers were asked to indicate the number of years they spent in school. Table 4 shows variations of the number of years that student teachers spent in schooling. 45% reported 11 years, 35% indicated 12 years and 15% reported 13 years. A small percent (5%) reported 14 years of schooling. As the normal number of years for attaining pre-college education is 12 years, it would seem that a large percentage of the respondents finished schooling one year earlier than is normally expected. Perhaps the schools awarded students promotion in some grades.

**Table 4: Number of Years Student Teachers Spent in school**

Number of years	Frequency/percent
11	36 (45%)
12	28 (35%)
13	12 (15%)
14	4 (5%)
Total number of respondents	80 (100%)

### 3.7 Performance at Post-Primary School

#### 3.7.1 Performance in English

It would seem that the student teachers who participated in this study did not do well in English at either JC or COSC, with none reporting A grades. Performance in English at JC was slightly better than at COSC for most student teachers. As indicated in Tables 5 and 6, 38% got good passes (6% B, 32% C) at JC, but the figure was lower (3% each for B and C) at COSC. While at JC 30% of those surveyed got an E or below, at COSC 62% had E or below.

#### 3.7.2 Performance in Mathematics

In Maths, the range is slightly wider, but the overall results are worse. At JC, one student had an A grade, and 22% were in the B/C bracket, while just over half got E or below, the Es forming the largest single group. By comparison, at COSC there were no As, 14% got B/C, and two-thirds got E or below, most of these being Fs.

#### 3.7.3 Performance in Science

Performance in Science at both exams was rather better, but still indicates weaknesses at COSC. In JC, 4% of students got an A, 10% a B, and 29% a C, with less than a third (30%) getting E or below. At COSC there were no As, though 13% got B, 20% C, and 39% had E or below.

**Table 5: Pass symbols at JC in English, Mathematics and Science Examination**

Value	English		Mathematics		Science	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
F	7	7.8%	19	21.1%	14	15.6%
E	20	22.2%	28	31.1%	13	14.4%
D	25	27.8%	19	21.1%	21	23.3%
C	29	32.2%	12	13.3%	26	28.9%
B	5	5.6%	8	6.9%	9	10.0%
A	0	0%	1	1.1%	4	4.4%
No response	4	4.4%	1	1.1%		
Total	90	100.0%	90	100.0%	90	100.0%

The average COSC results which the College uses in admitting candidates into the Diploma programme show that the most students have D grades or below in the core subjects. Using these symbols, it becomes difficult to accept the notion that the calibre of student teachers for the new diploma programme is better than those who entered the old PTC programme.

**Table 6: Pass symbol at COSC in English, Mathematics and Science Examination**

Value	English		Mathematics		Science	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
F	18	20.0%	43	47.8%	23	25.6%
E	38	42.2%	16	17.8%	12	13.3%
D	25	27.8%	14	15.5%	22	24.4%
C	3	3.3%	12	13.3%	18	20.0%
B	3	3.3%	1	1.1%	12	13.3%
No response	3	3.3%	4	4.4%	3	3.3%
Total	90	100.0%	90	100.0%	90	100.0%

### 3.8 Teaching Experience

Student teachers were asked to indicate whether or not they taught prior to joining the College. As Table 7 shows, the majority (71%) of the student teachers had not taught before they were admitted into the College. Further analysis shows that of those who indicated that they had taught 20% did so in the post primary schools while 9% had taught in a primary school. Although the figure is small the message is that there are student teachers who had some teaching experience by the time they entered NTTC.

**Table 7: Whether Respondents Taught Between Leaving School and Coming to NTTC**

Whether Taught	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	28%
No	62	69%
No response	3	03%
Total	90	100%

### 3.9 Perceptions of Student teachers about primary schooling

This section of the report presents what student teachers remember as good and bad things about primary schooling.

#### 3.9.1 Best Things about primary schooling

Respondents were to rate the best things about primary schooling. Table 8 shows that some student teachers (20) consider lessons as one of the best things about schooling. Other related school activities regarded as best of the things about schooling were an opportunity to participate in sports activities, and the personality or character of teachers. Other related issues indicated by the respondents had to do with academic performance; relationships among teachers and among students from various villages, learning to speak English as a second language and taking school trips.

**Table 8: Best Things about Primary Schooling<sup>2</sup>**

Best things about primary schooling	Frequency
Interest in content of lesson	20
Sports activities	18
Reading and writing	10
Good caring teachers	5
Good performance at school	3
Total number of responses	56

#### 3.9.2 Worst Things about Primary Schooling

Student teachers were asked to write about their worst primary school experiences. Most of these related to corporal punishment, and to large class size that did not correspond to the number of teachers in the school. Some indicated that they were not encouraged to communicate in English on school campus and that this practice contributed to poor academic performance, as English is not only a subject, it is also a language used for

<sup>2</sup> Tables 8 – 14 have been compiled from responses to open-ended questions. They report the frequencies of the themes occurring in the data; percentages are inappropriate in such analyses.

examination. There were however, contradictory messages on this subject with other respondents indicating that their schools required them to communicate in English.

Other concerns were on the issue of choosing subjects. Student teachers indicated concern over lack of opportunities to choose subjects and/or being expected to do all subjects. The male students expressed concern about having to do home economics for instance.

Other unhappy memories reported focused on teachers themselves and performance in the primary schools. In the first instance, student teachers recalled being taught by lazy teachers and/or unsympathetic ones who, among other things, could neither supply marks regularly nor return scripts on time, yet students would pass the end-of-term tests. They reported that some of the teachers were autocratic in their way of handling situations, for they were not allowed to express their views. In the second instance, students indicated academic performance in the primary school as one of the worst schooling experiences. They expressed a feeling of disappointment especially concerning those students who failed to complete primary schooling. In their view, one of the causes of poor performance at the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) was the use of English when doing assignments where students did not understand the English language.

Other concerns focused on a number of pertinent issues and practices. They mentioned poor school facilities, long walking distances between home and school, having to gather wood for cooking school lunch, and being taught in overcrowded classrooms as additional bad things about primary schooling. The following are selected extracts from responses by the student teachers.

1. Worst school practices:

*To be beaten when I have got things wrong and when I have made a mistake;  
We were not forced to speak English and so when I got to secondary school I took long time to learn it.*

2. Teachers

*Being taught by the same teacher through out the year in all subjects such that if you do not understand him/her that was my chance to fail class;  
The teachers were few but pupils were many and thus made difficult of teaching;*

3. Locations

*Rivers were flooded and I was forbidden to go to school on such days;*

There are some unique responses cutting across worst and best experiences. These responses focused specifically on teachers. Some student teachers reported as one of the best things, attending school where a parent was one of the teachers. Others expressed concern over being taught by the same teacher throughout primary schooling as both the best and the worst experience. To those student teachers who felt that being taught by the same teacher was good, the process made them know their teacher better. On the

contrary, if the relationship was not positive, there was misunderstanding between the teacher and the pupils.

### 3.10 Images of primary school teachers

Views about primary school experiences would not be complete without discussing the teachers that the student teachers came across during their primary education. In the essays, student teachers were asked to document their perceptions of bad and good primary school teachers that taught them.

#### 3.10.1 Characteristics of Good Teachers

Table 9 presents student teachers' responses to the question on characteristics of good teachers. It would seem that most (18) student teachers that responded to the question looked for competency as one of the best characters of a good teacher. An image of pastoral care is yet another character that they tend to look for. Other characteristics of good teachers are presented in Table 9. Most of these do not seem to focus that much on academic matters.

**Table 9: Characteristics of Good Teachers**

Characteristics	Frequency
Competent in subject matter/teaching/in explaining	18
Patient, sympathy and empathy	13
Dedication to work	6
Kind, calm and good	6
Advised about for future life	4
Varied teaching methods	4
Parent like	3
Did not use corporal punishment	3
Admirable, dignified and well dressed	3
Punctual	2
Gave individualized attention	2
Used corporal punishment	2
Total no. of responses	66

An analysis of the student teachers' images of good teachers revealed that they admired teachers who cared for the social and personal development of the pupils. In expressing their views, they used words such as "individualized" attention in teaching, projection for the future of pupils, counseling skills and self-respecting teachers. Parenting by teachers seems to be one of the most common characteristics of a good teacher. The student teachers used words such as loving, warm-hearted, sociable, compassionate, kind, merciful to describe friendly and kind teachers. The following quotations bring out other characteristics of what student teachers considered or described as the good teacher.

### 1. Images focusing on academic matters

*The teacher Mrs. M. knew very well how to convey the subject she taught; in addition she never beat a kid for not understanding the concepts;  
He is a man of his words. Although he used corporal punishment - He explained until the last pupil understood and he sympathized with pupils;*

### 2. Images of a teacher as a guide and counsellor

*He advised me to work hard and choose a marketable course that would help me get any job I want;  
He was a dedicated someone who cared about his pupils' learning; whenever one fails he will ask to see him in front of others. He did not discriminate his students;  
I liked my headmaster he was a man of encouragement and advice on how to learn;*

### 3. Images of pastoral care

*My Science teacher – she wasn't a teacher to us but she was also our friend, our mother, our strength and our pride – she was optimistic about us;  
He was friendly to every student but strict to those who tried to misbehave – not cruel but counseling and having a constant follow-up for betterment.  
She was a serious teacher ... and usually punished pupils who did not do their work but she would not get angry with them;*

#### 3.10.2 Characteristics of liked teachers

Student teachers were asked to write about characteristics of teachers that they liked. There are many such characteristics. For some student teachers sociable, friendly, helpful and approachable are attributes describing teachers they liked most. Other characteristics they mentioned were: having a sense of humour, marking student scripts and returning them in time, having good leadership and classroom management skills, being a disciplinarian and making students enjoy teaching. Responses about characteristics of liked teachers seem to be very similar to those of best teachers.

##### Some examples of comments about “liked teachers”

- encouraging good behaviour;
- marking and returning on time;
- being motherly/parent like to one's student;
- preparing lessons and never digressing during teaching;
- being tidy and well behaved;
- being dynamic and using a variety of teaching skills;
- being always punctual;
- never using corporal punishment;
- using corporal punishment for a good reason;
- treating students as equals;
- being competent and knowing the content;
- challenging and encouraging students to learn;
- accommodating and treating individuals according to ability;
- also teaching vocational skills;

The following quotations are examples of attributes associated with liked teachers, showing a combination of parental and guidance and counsellor attributes, and the ability to motivate:

*She had great love over all her students, treated them equally. I always remember when she helped one of us who was my classmates. The girl had nobody to care for, [her] relatives had just paid school fees for her and then left her like that giving her no good food and clothes, but my teacher preferred to support that poor girl;*

*He was always ready to offer help either in academic or personal problems to each child. In my village during those days, people were much concerned about traditional schools. Some of the schools there could not admit those from traditional schools anymore, some made them pay for being re-admitted. However, Mr. – was not of that sort. He welcomed everyone back to school. Above all he helped children with financial problems;*

*Mr./Mrs. was the first teacher in my life who ever made me realise my abilities as far as my studies were concerned;*

*She motivated the class by marking the class work, giving assignments and tests and afterwards giving back the results;*

### 3.10.3 Characteristics of Disliked Teachers

Table 10 presents student teachers' list of characteristics of teachers they disliked. The table shows that what students rated worst was being treated as though they were not human beings. They hated being caned, doing gardening as a form of punishment, and being pushed out of class. Student teachers also indicated that drunkenness/excessive drinking, as well as abusive language and inconsistency were some of the unwelcome behaviour.

**Table 10: Student-Teachers Responses to the Question of bad and disliked teachers**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
He/she used corporal punishment and abusive language	26
Not committed, never punctual, lazy, not smart and moody	14
He/she was a drunkard	11
He was not approachable/not concerned about slow learners	11
Could not deliver/poor teaching skills/hated being asked	17
He treated students unfairly	5
He was an easygoing type of person	5
Dressed very poorly/ dressed glamorously	4
Total number of responses	93

The following are some of the examples of characteristics of bad/disliked teachers submitted by the student teachers themselves. These quotations reveal a wide range of things that student teachers did not like about their worst teachers. There are concerns about not teaching and therefore not benefiting students. Others refer to teachers' behaviours that were not exemplary.

#### 1. Images of unacceptable behaviour

*He was a drunkard, the worse part of it, he used to come to class drunk, during those situations he would not teach – the only thing he would do was to set some questions and would beat us if we got it wrong;*

*I met a teacher who was not behaving like other human beings. She was more or less the same as wild animals. The worst thing was bringing her family problems into the class. Once if she had a misunderstanding with a parent, the child of that parent was going to suffer the consequences. Sometimes she came to class late because the previous day she was visiting friends or relatives or she was drunk. Hey, that lady was a good drunkard;*

*When going to school he would just wear clothes which were not ironed. On the head it was as if it was a home for ticks. He would never polish his shoes;*

#### 2. Images of poor teaching

*In class, she could not explain, pupils made unnecessary mistakes. When a teacher fails to explain, pupils will obviously make mistakes and therefore fail;*

*I did not understand his teaching method. The worst thing was that I could not have a chance to tell what I did not understand because always when he entered in the class he used to say 'if you do not know what you're here for, it's up to you. Others who were slow learners like me were bored.*

#### 3.10.4 Related Experiences Gained Prior to College Education

Student teachers were asked to write about their own teaching experiences before being admitted into the College and then to relate those experiences to the requirements of teaching. On the first issue, students' experiences included working as a teacher, working with children with disability and working in a pre-school. Student teachers' responses to the second issue showed that those who taught before enjoyed teaching and that through this experience they had learned to become tolerant. They also pointed out that self-expression and confidence in addressing many people made them realize that teachers should be caring, loving, patient and available to answer students' questions. Other student teachers argued that helping others to learn to sing at school, being a school prefect, and learning through helping others with their homework were experiences that related to teaching. The following quotations illustrate their point of view:

*I used to help other students who had problems in some subjects like development studies. I found that these problems were caused (sic) by the teacher teaching them and I have just come here in order to have more knowledge so that I can go on helping those that have problems;*

*I normally encountered pupils with educational problems and this challenged me a lot so I can help those kids[...] good behaviour and dedication to work are important.*

### 3.11 Future Plans and Expectations

#### 3.11.1 Type of teacher that student teachers would like to be

Part of the essay concerned the type of teacher student teachers would like to be. It would seem from the kind of responses (see Table 11) that student teachers gave, that they would like to emulate attributes of good teachers and perhaps those they liked.

**Table 11: Type of teacher student teachers would like to be**

Type of teacher aspired to	Frequency
Good, exemplary, responsible and a role model	17
Help slow learners and encourage students to realize their potential	15
Caring and supportive	15
Innovative and help students enjoy my teaching	12
Approachable, patient and flexible	10
Committed, know content, prepare lessons and be punctual	9
Well behaved, respect myself, avoid having affairs at school	7
Motivate students through giving rewards	5
Attend to individual needs especially for those with disability	5
Avoid using abusive language and punishment	4
Enforce responsibility, devotedness and commitment	3
Total number of responses	102

#### 3.11.2 Reasons for studying in teacher education

Student teachers' reasons for studying in teaching can be grouped into three themes. These were professional development/further education, national/country/patriotic reasons and having been motivated by others. The latter reasons "having been motivated by others" does not provide the exact reason. It suggests that such a large group of future teachers is not yet clear about the reasons for joining a teaching career in the first place. According to Table 12, the most popular reason that student teachers gave for studying in teacher education is to further their education.

**Table 12: Reasons for studying in teacher education**

<b>Reasons for studying in teaching</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Further education	20
Motivated by others	18
Other personal benefits	15
Professional development	14
National reasons	15
Total number of responses	82

The quotations below elaborate on the reasons given by student teachers for studying in teacher education:

1. Patriotic reasons

*I want to help in improvement of education in the country as well as Africa in whole;*

*I would like to help other people get educated for them to have brighter future because without education there is no life;*

2. Professional reasons

*I want to be a professional teacher with enough experience in dealing with pupils.*

3.11.3 *The value of training teachers*

Student teachers were asked to comment on the value of undergoing training. Those who were of the opinion that there is need for training felt that training ensures trainees acquire teaching methods, learn the psychology of education, learn how to teach children with different characteristics, and learn the content of the subject they are to teach. In their own words, some student teachers had this to say:

*If they (student teachers) are not trained they will end up teaching wrong things to the children.*

*Have to know exactly what they are talking about and also to support their ideas.*

*We will be taught how to approach students of different abilities.*

**3.12 Life in the College**

The student teachers were asked whether or not life at College was good, and to provide reasons for their answer. Their responses on this question can be grouped into two categories. These were academic and social life at the College. Comments on academic related reasons were on issues such as learning to practise becoming a teacher and on the freedom to study what one wants. On the second category, respondents indicated that

they learned to become responsible, had an opportunity to participate in sports and in music. Other reasons were on culture of the college whereby freedom of speech was acceptable as well as absence of corporal punishment.

**Table 13: Reasons for Stating that Life at the College is Good**

<b>Life in the College is good</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Good learning, sports and boarding facilities	21
Social life	16
Freedom to study what one wants to learn	8
We cooperate with others/study in groups	7
We train in academic education	6
All students follow the same course of study – teaching	3
Sufficient time given for training	4
Total number of responses	65

Life in the College was perceived by some student teachers as being difficult, both academically and socially. On the academic side, they indicated that they have to struggle to pass all subjects because failing one means repeating that subject for the entire year before one could proceed to the next level of study. Other difficulties included being:

*Required to do all subjects, regardless of whether or not one had prior knowledge of such a subject;*

*Responsible for own class attendance and performance;*

*A day scholar and not having as much access to library facilities as is the case with those who stay on campus and finally*

*Taught through a lecture method.*

Other difficulties mentioned related to issues of too much freedom, shortage of boarding facilities, and different personalities resulting in unacceptable behaviour. The respondents regarded the bureaucracy at the College as being unacceptable, including lack of access to the College Director. Student teachers also mentioned poor relationships between old and new entrants as problematic. In their own words, they had this to say:

*Unsystematic method of getting meals resulting in starting some classes later than the allocated time. Moreover, some foods cause general illness among students. Sometimes we get our meals through fighting; old students treat us like slaves yet we have come for the same purpose at the college;*

*A lot of things though good and helpful have to be stored in one's head. We have to study even when we are tired.*

### 3.13 Becoming a teacher

#### 3.13.1 Advantages of becoming a teacher

Student teachers were asked to comment on what they considered to be the advantages of becoming a teacher. Their responses are presented in Table 14. These advantages range from academic to social matters.

**Table 14: Advantages of Becoming a Teacher**

<b>Advantages of Becoming a Teacher</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>
It is easy to get a job as a teacher	15
Ample time for holidays/family time	15
Academic improvement/further study and getting paid study leave	11
Contributing towards the country's development	5
Improve education of students	5
Opportunity to meet various personalities and learning to cope with it	5
Teaching service regulations build good and respectable teaching people	4
Financial security/sure of a monthly salary	4
Total no. of responses	64

On the negative side however, student teachers expressed concerns over a number of issues. They saw teaching as a highly demanding profession. For instance, they indicated that teaching was stressful in that teachers sometimes fail to put theory into practice. They are expected to know everything, and tension may result from poor relationships between teachers and parents. They reported that teaching requires them to be patient. In their view, teacher/pupil ratios are high and as a result they have to teach large classes, meaning that they are to mark many scripts while also being required to prepare lessons for other days. They further indicated that teachers carry the blame for students who fail to perform as expected.

Other disadvantages were administrative in that in some cases management of schools was reported as not cooperative. Respondents felt that low teachers' salary structures; lack of a pension, being attacked by students and/or being hated by parents, and being rejected by the society were some of the many disadvantages of becoming teachers. They also reported that sometimes teachers have to work with difficult students. They also indicated that too much is expected of them. Such expectations include having to always be decent as they are supposed to be role models for their students, irrespective of students' varying personalities.

Interviews with a group of representatives of "Parents in Education Association" do confirm the student teachers' fears and anxieties. The group expressed concerns about lack of creativity on the part of to-day's teacher. In the group's view, teachers do not foster inquisitive minds in their students and they (teachers) do not challenge students adequately.

### *3.13.2 Career ambitions and expectations*

Asked about career ambitions and expectations, a large number of student teachers (60) indicated that they would like to teach with the intention of promoting standards of education and also focusing on slow learners. Another group (24) was of the view that there is need to further one's studies. Taking this issue further, student teachers were asked to comment on other possible avenues in the education system. Their responses are shown in Table 15. Over a third of student teachers (36%) indicated that they would like to teach in a primary school. Their reasons for preferring this level were that they are being trained for this level of teaching and that they had always wanted to teach small children with a view to giving them a strong foundation. There was also an opinion that children in primary school are of a young age and that they are obedient and therefore pleasant to teach.

It seems also that their next highest preference was becoming a college lecturer (32%). In support of the choice to be a teacher training college lecturer, respondents showed that they wanted to train teachers and thus reach one of the highest careers in the teaching profession. They saw prospects of furthering their education and getting a high salary when they are teacher educators. They also saw teacher educators as professionals who do not have heavy workloads, when compared to teaching at other levels of the education system, especially the primary school level. This argument was supported by an elaboration on one of the lecturers' teaching strategies whereby student teachers have to search for information and discover things for themselves. This was interpreted as making for light teaching loads. Another observation was that college lecturers demand respect from their students.

Other avenues of professional advancement were seen as becoming a primary school head teacher (31%), or becoming a Ministry of Education official (20%). The reasons advanced for becoming a primary school head teacher included supervising teacher performance, and contributing to the improvement of school regulations such as ensuring that each stakeholder plays his or her role in the school development activities. It is surprising that student teachers did not see becoming a district resource teacher as one of the possible avenues as this is one of the possible career options for teachers.

Student teachers were asked to state what they thought would help them realize their ambitions. Forty-nine (49) student teachers indicated that further education would help them realize their ambition. Twelve (12) were of the opinion that money would help them achieve that goal. However, they also saw a number of possible problems that might affect their plans for further career. These were personal responsibilities (22), poor conditions of service (20) family problems (1) and poor salaries (1).

**Table 15: Career Ambitions and Expectations**

Type of Career ambitions	Frequency	Percentage of sample
Primary school teacher	32	36%
Teacher education lecturer	29	32%
Primary school headteacher	28	31%
Ministry of education official	18	20%
Secondary school teacher	11	12%
District education officer	11	12%
University teacher	10	11%
Secondary school headteacher	4	4%
NGO/Development agency	1	1%
Total number of responses	144	100%

\* Note some of the respondents ticked more than one career options. The percentage is calculated out of 90 being the number in the sample.

### **3.14 Challenges Facing the Teaching Profession and Possible Changes in Education**

#### *3.14.1 Challenges*

Student teachers were asked to comment on possible challenges facing the teaching profession. The data indicates that the teaching profession faces a number of challenges or problems. These range from classroom experiences such as methods of teaching and of assessing teaching; student behaviour; competence in using English language as a medium of instruction and teaching all subjects regardless of whether or not one is competent in teaching such subjects. Other problems were seen as community perceptions about the profession, opportunities for in-service education and advancing one's career, and poor conditions of work.

#### *3.14.2 The future of education in the next ten years:*

Asked to comment on how they thought education would change in the next ten years, student teachers expressed hope that the training of teachers will improve such that every student will be able to speak English fluently. Performance in schools will and, consequently, education standards as a whole would improve. Moreover, student teachers would acquire skills to handle student discipline and therefore reduce/abolish corporal punishment. Student teachers were also of the view that improved teaching would enable products of such programmes to provide education that is relevant to community needs. This particular response seems to be an answer to the concern expressed by the "Parents in Education" association, that education does not produce students with inquisitive minds.

Student teachers also hoped that teaching facilities and conditions of teaching service would improve and contribute to the better standards of education. To the respondents,

better provision of education would be realized where a system of subject teaching as opposed to classroom teaching would be adopted. This concern tends to suggest and/or support another concern expressed earlier about having to teach all subjects regardless of whether one is competent in all of them or not. Other views pointed to the need for professional support provided by the resource teachers and working with committed teachers. The latter concern suggests that teachers saw as an important factor, working jointly with others to improve the education system.

However, some student voices predicted decline in the Lesotho education system. This group indicated that education has become a business for some people. People were out to open schools for purposes of making money more than to offer good education. Another interesting voice referred to too much freedom given to students and that such freedom could lead to students rebelling against teachers. This particular concern tends to suggest that some student teachers would rather see punishment maintained.

### **3.15 Views about teaching and related issues**

Student teachers' views were gathered by asking them to respond to a number of statements. There were four possible responses: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. For ease of analysis these have been collapsed into the two categories of Agree and Disagree. Respondents were also asked to give their reasons for agreement or disagreement. This extra data makes possible further insights into the student teachers' thinking at the start of their college programme. However, as the results were not subjected to statistical analysis for significance, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

#### *3.15.1 Views on the Statement that "Teachers are born and not made"*

Responses to the question whether teachers are born not made suggests that 50% disagree with this notion while a further 50% agree. Thus, half the student teachers agree with the statement while half disagree. The cross tabulation as reflected in Table 16 indicates that 54% of the female student teachers and 40% of the male student teachers disagree. In contrast, there is also a difference in the percentage of those who agree, with 60% of male student teachers and 46% of female student teachers agreeing with the statement.

**Table 16: Level of agreement with the statement “Teachers are born not made” by Gender**

Level of Agreement	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Agree	28 ((46%)	15 (60%)	43 (50%)
Disagree	33 (54%)	10 (40%)	43 (50%)
Total no. of respondents	61	25	86 (100%)

Reasons advanced for agreeing were: *“although some trained (teachers) produce good result, those not so much educated still produce good results”*; *“made (trained) teachers do not last in the job, cannot handle students and they teach for money”*. [It] *does not mean that they know everything, its out of choice from COSC and ability to transmit knowledge*”. Those who indicated that they disagree advanced reasons such as *“that’s why there are teaching institutions”*; *“students go to NTTC because of not knowing that to do”* and *“as long as one can further studies you can be a good teacher”*.

### 3.15.2 University education versus Teacher Training College

According to Table 17 the level of disagreement (76%) indicated that they were not so enthusiastic about going to university. *“NTTC produces quality teachers, we must have a good foundation before university degree”*. Other student teachers indicated that they disagree because they *‘intend to teach and build a good foundation at primary level’*. There is a consistency about going back to teach in the primary schools throughout the different sections of this study where student teachers had to comment about their future plans. The cross tabulation though shows that more female student teachers (27%) compared to their male counterparts (19%) agreed that they would rather be at the university than at the college. Among the reasons advanced were: *“NTTC is waste of time if you want to do a degree, peer pressure as well as examination results especially English, I am forced to do subjects that I do not like, for example Mathematics”*. Those who disagree suggest that if it were possible to have got a good pass, they probably would have gone straight to university.

**Table 17: Opinion on the statement “I would rather have gone to university than teacher training College” by gender**

Level of agreement	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Agree	17 (27%)	5 (19%)	22 (24%)
Disagree	47 (73%)	21 (81%)	68 (76%)
Total number of respondents	64	26	90(100%)

### 3.15.3 statement “I prefer to teach in secondary school than at primary school”

Student teachers were asked to indicate the level to which they agreed with the statement “I prefer to teach in secondary school than at primary school”. Table 18 shows that more male student teachers (46 %) as opposed to 14% of the females prefer teaching in secondary school to the primary school. It would seem therefore that the male student teachers are more conscious about the status than their female counterparts or that perhaps they do not want to teach young children and too many subjects. Those who would rather teach in the secondary school indicate that *‘there is specialisation at the secondary school level unlike in primary school where one has to teach all the subjects. That it is easier to teach at this level because of availability of teaching materials and that the salaries for primary school teachers are low’*. Generally however, a larger percentage of the entire population disagree (76%) with the idea of teaching in secondary school. Perhaps, student teachers feel they are being trained to teach at the primary school level and that this is the level that they should remain at. Some of the major reasons for those who disagreed with the statement are that: *“Secondary school students are too naughty for my age – I would rather start at primary school”*; *“Because of my qualifications (Diploma)”*; *“I want to lay a good foundation and want to be a role model”* and *“small children learn fast”*.

**Table 18: Opinion on the Statement “I would rather teach in secondary school than a primary school” by Gender**

Level of agreement	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Agree	9 (14%)	12 (46%)	21 (24%)
Disagree	54 (86%)	14 (54%)	68 (76%)
Total no. of respondents	63	26	89 (100%)

### 3.15.4 Statement “Teaching is a very difficult job to do well”

Table 19 indicates that although more male than female student teachers agreed with the statement “teaching is a very difficult job to do well”, there is little difference in the overall amount of agreement. 58% of males and 51% of females agree with the statement. Those who agreed were of the feeling that there are a number of issues that contribute to teaching being a difficult job: planning, public expectations and teaching conditions. In their own words they had these to say *“if a teacher does not plan for lessons”*. *“Because you have to be exemplary”* and the fact that *“even if one teaches well pupils still fail because not all students understand all teachers, some students are fast learners while others are not”*. Another concern was about the fact that *“living conditions makes it difficult here in Lesotho and that teaching requires patience and kindness”*. Those who disagreed indicated that if one intended to be a teacher it shouldn’t be a difficult job but if you are forced into it then one will perceive it as difficult. The assumption being that if one is motivated, likes the profession and has been trained to teach well it should not be that difficult a job to do well. Analysed by age, the data showed a slight tendency for those aged 21 and below to perceive the job as more difficult than the older trainees did.

**Table 19: Opinion on the Statement “Teaching is a very difficult job to do well” by gender**

Level of agreement	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Agree	32 (51%)	15 (58%)	47 (53%)
Disagree	31 (49%)	11 (42%)	42 (47%)
Total number of respondents	63	26	89 (100%)

*3.15.5 Statement “Teaching experience is more important than educational qualifications in appointing head teachers”*

According to Table 20, both groups of student teachers; those who taught before (72%) and those who did not teach (63%) share the same feeling that teaching experience is most important in appointing head teachers. Reasons advanced for agreeing were: “*experienced teachers can manage the school easily, and or better*” whereas those who disagree are of the feeling that “*head teachers tend to get more money*”. Student teachers who were of the opinion that teaching experience is more important than educational qualifications advanced the following reasons: “*experienced teachers can manage the school easily, community and students tend to like and trust a teacher with longer experience*”. Those who disagreed were of the feeling that “*highly qualified teachers are better in administration and that they receive better pay*”.

**Table 20: Opinion on the Statement “Teaching Experience is more important than educational qualifications in Appointing Head Teachers”**

Level of agreement	Teaching experience is important in appointing head-teacher		Total
	Taught before	Not taught before	
Agree	18 (72%)	38 (63%)	56 (66%)
Disagree	7 (28%)	22 (37%)	19 (34%)
Total number of responses	25	60	85 (100%)

*3.15.6 Statement “Teachers have more status than other professionals”*

Student teachers were asked to indicate their opinion regarding the statement that teachers have more status than other professionals. It would seem that student teachers have a positive attitude towards the profession for which they are studying, in that overall student teachers agreed that teaching has more status than other professions. This was true for both male and female students.

**Table 21: Opinion on the Statement “Teachers have more status than other professionals” by gender**

Level of agreement	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Agree	36 (77%)	18 (75%)	54 (76%)
Disagree	11 (24%)	6 (25%)	17 (24%)
Total number of responses	47	24	71 (100%)

3.15.7 Statement “Children-centred teaching tends to lower educational standards”

Table 22 presents the opinions of student teachers regarding the statement that “children-centred teaching tends to lower educational standards”. It would seem that of those who taught before, the majority of them (59%) tend to disagree that children-centred approaches lower the educational standards of the children. This response is even more strongly supported by the student teachers (67%) that did not teach prior to their entry into teacher training. The reasons advanced for agreeing are: *‘not every child is ready to learn on their own, 90% might be stubborn and naughty and that therefore teachers have to ensure class control’*, that *‘pupils would not learn well and that they would think that they know everything’*. On the contrary, student teachers seem to believe that *‘children learn more by doing than by listening’* and that the method *‘helps them do things themselves and sometimes create pride for having discovered something good’*. It is noteworthy that 20 students did not respond, suggesting they might be unclear about the concept.

**Table 22: Opinion on the Statement “Children centred teaching tends to lower educational standards” by whether or not they taught before**

Level of agreement	Teaching experience		
	Taught before	Not taught before	Total
Agree	9 (41%)	16 (33%)	25 (36%)
Disagree	13 (59%)	32 (67%)	45 (64%)
Total number of responses	22	48	70 (100%)

3.15.8 Statement “Friends think I am fortunate to be training to be a teacher”

According to Table 23, more (77%) respondents from the foothill area of the country than those (67%) of the lowland regions believe that their friends think that they are fortunate to be undergoing training in teacher education. Generally, most respondents (63%) from various geographical areas tend to agree that their friends think they are fortunate to be training to become teachers. The reasons given include: *‘some of them have applied many times to be admitted to the training but still failed to get admission’*. *‘Because teachers contribute very much to the development of the nation’*. *‘Teaching is a long term job and teachers are safe and respected at all times’*. Others indicated that their friends think that teaching is *‘an easy job and that teachers have a lot of free time’*. Their

positive feelings point to the importance of job security, the personal benefits as well as being fortunate to get admission. Those who disagree indicated that *‘teaching is not good as some students tend to be stubborn and make fun of teachers’*.

**Table 23: Statement “My Friends think I am fortunate to be training to be a teacher” by geographical location**

Level of agreement	Geographical location			
	Foothill	Lowland	Mountain	Total
Agree	10 (77%)	37 (67%)	9 (56%)	56 (63%)
Disagree	3 (23%)	18 (33%)	7 (44%)	28 (37%)
Total number of responses	13	55	16	84(100%)

### 3.15.9 Statement “When I qualify as a teacher I should be able to teach where I like”

Table 24 shows that a large proportion of student teachers (64%) from all geographical locations seem to agree with the notion of freedom to teach where one wants. This feeling is particularly so (76%) among candidates who came from mountainous areas. Perhaps they would not want to be restricted to the mountain regions. Those who agree were of the feeling that *“this will make me apply the maximum effort”* and *“there is a shortage of teachers”*. Those who disagree had this to say: *“there are a lot of schools where qualified teachers are wanted”* and that *“there is a shortage of teachers in many parts of the country”*. *“I prefer to teach in the lowland but may be prevented by some situations such as lack of vacancies or not having a required qualification”*. The reasons advanced tend to suggest that student teachers would prefer there to be some flexibility in the placement of teachers.

**Table 24: Opinion on the Statement “When I qualify as a teacher I should be able to teach where I like” by location of district**

Level of agreement	Location of district			
	Foothill	Lowland	Mountain	Total
Agree	8 (57%)	37 (63%)	13 (76%)	58 (64%)
Disagree	6 (43.8%)	22 (37%)	4 (24%)	32 (36%)
Total	14	59	17	90 (100%)

### 3.15.10 Statement “Teachers cannot do much to improve the academic performance of low achieving students”

Table 25 shows that 87% of those student teachers who had teaching experience and 75% of those who did not have any, disagreed with the statement that teachers cannot do much to improve the academic performance of low achieving students, whereas 25% of those who had not taught before agreed. On the whole, 79% of student teachers think teachers can do something to improve the academic performance of low achieving students. It seems therefore that the majority of the student teachers believe something can be done about slow learners. There probably can be hope that this particular group would be going

back to teaching with enthusiasm about helping all student teachers. They for example felt that teachers could do much by taking such students one by one and giving them some tutorial lessons. However, there was a group that agreed that not much could be done to improve the academic performance of slow learners. The reasons advanced focused on those teachers who are not committed to the world of teaching but happen to be in the profession for purposes of earning a salary.

**Table 25: Opinion on the Statement that “Teachers cannot do much to improve the academic performance of low achieving students” by whether or not respondents taught before coming to NTTC**

Level of agreement	Teachers cannot do much		Total
	Taught before	Did not teach before	
Agree	3 (12.5%)	15 (25%)	18 (21%)
Disagree	21 (87.5%)	45 (75%)	66 (79%)
Total	24	60	84 (100%)

*3.15.11 Statement “Young teachers have better ideas about teaching than old ones”*

Responses of student teachers to the statement that young teachers have better ideas about teaching than old ones are presented in Table 26. Two thirds of all age groups (63% of the younger and 69% of the older) tend to disagree with the notion that young teachers have better ideas than experienced ones. In essence there seems to be an impression that experience helps one to cope with the teaching encounter. In their own words student teachers had this to say:

- *old teachers know how to handle children with patience,*
- *old teachers are more knowledgeable about teaching, that they can tell good from bad experience,*
- *It depends on the individual teacher. Other teachers like salaries only whereas others aim at good results and it is (therefore) the qualification and not age that matters.*

Those who agreed argued that young teachers “*have been taught new methods that would enable them to do their best*”. “*Old teachers believe in beating students, causing some students to drop out of school*” and that “*young teachers are not lazy to stand in front of students or to mark them*”.

**Table 26: Extent to which respondents agree that “young teachers have better ideas about teaching than old teachers” by age groups**

Level of agreement	Age group		
	21 years and below	22 years & above	Total
Agree	19 (37%)	11 (31%)	30 (34%)
Disagreed	32 (63%)	25 (69%)	57 (66%)
Total number of respondents	51	36	87(100%)

3.15.12 Statement “Teaching pupils facts is the most important thing a teacher can do”

The pattern emerging from Table 27, indicates that the majority (71%) of student teachers who taught before agree that the most important thing a teacher can do is to teach pupils facts that they need to know. This high percentage is supported by student teachers (76%) who had no teaching experience. The conclusion is that on the whole, student teachers, regardless of teaching experience share the same views. Those who agreed indicated that “*facts are important to teach for children to understand life and do what is right in their lives and future*”. Those who disagreed had this to say; “*not only those facts but other facts are not in the syllabus like HIV/AIDS. Teachers must also bring those into teaching in order to help children understand life better*”.

**Table 27: Opinion on the Statement “The most important thing a teacher can do is to teach pupils facts that they need to know” by whether or not respondents taught before entering college**

Level of agreement	Teaching experience		
	Taught before	Not taught before	Total
Agree	17 (71%)	47 (76%)	64 (74%)
Disagree	7 (29%)	15 (24%)	22 (26%)
Total number of respondents	24	62	86

3.15.13 Statement “School pupils learn more by listening to the teacher than by asking questions”

According to Table 28, 78% of the student teachers who had not taught prior to being admitted in the college disagreed with the statement that pupils learn more by listening while only 60% of those who had a teaching experience shared the same feeling. This suggests experience makes them more didactic. Student teachers who agreed indicated that “*teachers know it all because they have the syllabus; students do not have (the document), therefore teachers must teach and students must learn*”. Those who disagreed, the majority of whom were those who had not taught before, had this to say “*an intelligent pupil is flexible in class. The more he/she asks the better she/he understands*” and that “*listening to the teacher only is not good for learning*”.

**Table 28: Opinion on the Statement “School pupils learn more from listening to the teacher than from asking questions” by whether or not taught before entering the College.**

Level of agreement	Teaching experience		Total
	Taught before	Not taught before	
Agree	10 (40%)	13 (22%)	23 (27%)
Disagree	15 (60%)	47 (78%)	62 (73%)
Total number of respondents	25	60	85(100%)

3.15.14 Statement “Primary school pupils cannot understand English so teachers have to use Sesotho”

A large proportion (84%) of the student teachers who taught prior to coming to college as well as those (79%) who did not have such an exposure tend to disagree that pupils in the primary schools cannot understand English so much that teachers have to teach in Sesotho. On the positive side, student teachers were of the opinion that “teaching in Sesotho leads to failure in examinations since they (examinations) are set in English”. “not all pupils understand English, so teachers should also teach in Sesotho. It should not be regular practice to teach in Sesotho”. Those who disagreed with the idea, the majority of whom had not taught before, had this to say: “primary pupils are capable of learning English from class 1, so teach in English”.

**Table 29: Opinion on the Statement “Primary pupils cannot understand English so teachers have to use Sesotho” by whether taught before entering teacher training.**

Level of agreement	Teaching experience		
	Taught before	Not taught before	Total
Agree	4 (16%)	13 (21%)	17 (20%)
Disagree	21 (84%)	49 (79%)	61 (80%)
Total no. of respondents	25	62	87(100%)

3.16.15 Statement “Corporal punishment should be available in school”

A large proportion of the student teachers who taught before (80%) tend to disagree with the notion that corporal punishment should be practised at school, while (72%) of those without teaching experience share the same feeling. This supports findings from other parts of this study that student teachers do not like the idea of corporal punishment. One of the reasons advanced was that “corporal punishment tends to make children become unnecessarily stubborn and naughty”. Those who agreed feel that corporal punishment helps learning to take place, but that it should not be excessive. Given the concern over corporal punishment expressed in other sections of this sub-study, it is a bit disturbing that there are some who believe corporal punishment should be available in school. It would seem that this trend of punishing students will be in the primary school system for sometime.

**Table 30: Opinion on the Statement “Corporal punishment should be available in school” by whether or not respondents taught before.**

Level of agreement	Teaching experience		Total
	Taught before	Not taught before	
Agree	5 (20%)	16 (28%)	21 (26%)
Disagree	20 (80%)	41 (72%)	61 (74%)
Total	25	57	82(100%)

3.15.16 Statement “Pupils need to be divided into ability groups to be taught well”

Both the student teachers with (56%) and without (69%) teaching experience agree that pupils need to be divided according to ability groups. Perhaps their understanding is that they may be able to give attention to the various ability groups according to each group’s demand. The group that agreed with this notion indicated that other pupils learn better from their group members/friends than from teachers and that teachers teach well when they handle small numbers instead of crowds.

**Table 31: Opinion on the statement “Pupils need to be divided into ability groups to be taught well” by whether or not respondents taught before**

Level of agreement	Teaching experience		Total
	Taught before	Not taught before	
Agree	14 (56%)	42 (69%)	56 (65%)
Disagree	11 (44%)	19 (21%)	30 (35%)
Total number of respondents	25	61	86(100%)

3.15.17 Statement “Teacher education should involve at least a year’s teaching practice”

Both the student teachers who had taught before (68%) and those without experience (70%) agreed with the statement that teacher education should involve a teaching practice component. They had this to say “*theory will be put into practice through teaching practice and that teachers get to know the pupils better*”. It would seem that prospective teachers value what they can get out of going on teaching practice, and would prefer it to be longer than it is at present.

**Table 32: Opinion on the Statement “Teacher education should involve at least a year’s teaching practice” by whether or not the respondent has taught before**

Level of agreement	Teaching experience		Total
	Taught before	Not taught before	
Agree	17 (68%)	42 (70%)	59 (70%)
Disagree	7 (28%)	18 (30%)	25 (30%)
Total	25	60	84

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

This section draws together the findings of this study, which investigated the entry characteristics of new entrants to the teacher training college. This is the first study of this nature undertaken at the National Teacher Training College. It may be noted as already pointed out, that the College has developed a practice of collecting data on some characteristics of new entrants by recording the entry qualifications and from interviews of these students prior to admission. The extent to which the College tutors use this information beyond admission purposes could be a subject of another investigation.

#### 4.1 Student teachers' backgrounds

It is difficult to generalise about the student teachers' backgrounds, as the response rate about parental occupation was so low. But since less than half the parents were educated beyond the primary level, it is likely that many work in subsistence farming or the informal sector; some were unemployed, and 21% of the mothers were said to be housewives. Most of this particular group of student teachers could be said to come from humble homes. However, 18% of the mothers and 2% of the fathers were teachers, and it is possible that they encouraged their children to follow them into teaching.

This study has revealed that the student teachers did not achieve high grades in the Junior Certificate and the COSC core subjects such as English, Mathematics and Science. It is possible therefore that students who cannot get admission in the university but have moderately good grades would seek admission at the College. The finding that this first group of the Diploma in Education (Primary) programme is not particularly of high calibre contradicts the plan on the part of the National Teacher Training College to admit a better brand of student teachers into this new Programme. The College experience of not attracting the best students might suggest that it would have to continue running the pre-entry course known as the "bridging course", with the purpose of improving the students' content knowledge. Otherwise, it would seem that the circle of receiving at the college and returning to the school system poorly qualified candidates would never be broken.

The other feature of the student teachers' backgrounds is that the majority of them are women. More female students were enrolled for the programme. Although men have traditionally sought work outside Lesotho, leaving a resident population with more women than men, it is not clear from the findings of this study whether or not the College is conscious about the number of male and female applicants in admitting potential students.

Regarding teaching experience, the results of the study show that very few students enter the College with much teaching experience, so that the views they have about primary schooling and teachers are probably based on their experience of having been students at this level themselves. Such views however, if investigated and discussed in college classrooms, could help relate college teaching to school realities.

## **4.2 Images of teachers**

The analysis of data from this study show that there were very powerful memories of good and bad experiences of primary schooling, as well as strong opinions held about teachers who teach at this level. Broadly speaking, student teachers' comments refer more to personal aspects than to professional ones with regard to the role of a teacher. Hence the need to have both male and female teachers in the school system.

The comments provided by the student teachers tend to portray an image of the teacher as a parent. Related to this image emerged others that are closely linked to it. These include teachers who are fair, friendly, patient and firm. Teachers who act like parents at this level of the education system are probably a necessity. The role model of good parenting should therefore be built into the college curriculum.

Further grouping of responses suggest that some respondents have an image of a teacher who appears to act as a social role model. They used words such as a teacher who is well behaved, who is polite and a teacher who dresses well. There were in this category of images other attributes, which could be linked to the social role. These include a teacher who is flexible, sociable, thoughtful and reliable. Teacher education should work on this strong image too. Teachers in our culture have always played this role of social worker in areas where one teaches. Relating to society must therefore form part of the college curriculum.

From the student teachers' responses it became clear that in as far as the professional role of a teacher is concerned, they had an image of a teacher who is able to explain the content clearly. The understanding here is that such a teacher would be having in mind the fact that students should understand what was being taught. There is also an indication that a professional teacher is one who paid enough attention to individual students, especially those who seemed to be slow learners. Interestingly, it became clear that a good teacher is the one who uses punishment appropriately.

Related to the image of a teacher as a professional is that of a teacher who has an effect on the learners. There was an indication that a good teacher is one who does something to or for his/her pupils. Respondents described teachers who helped their pupils achieve good results as good and therefore professional teachers. Teachers who had an ability to encourage their students to aspire for further education and advised them accordingly were described as teachers who had an effect on their pupils. In essence what seems to emerge from the submissions about a teacher who tends to influence students in positive ways is that good teachers may have contributed to career choices. The career guidance

course needs to capture this notion. Teachers need skills to help student in choosing careers. The College might demonstrate this by inviting guest speakers of different professional backgrounds to give job talks.

Although images of good teachers indicate very positive things about teachers, there seems to be a gap with regard to the academic ability of good teachers. Student teachers, other than just indicating that good teachers explain well, do not seem to have much to say about teachers' subject knowledge or expertise. That the image of a good teacher as "expert" is missing might suggest that at primary school level, students look for images of parents more than an expert instructor. It is incumbent upon the College to make sure that the value of knowing one's content and being an expert teacher is brought to the students' attention, especially by the content courses as well as the education course.

One impression emerging from the preceding conclusions is that students have a strong tendency to say they are going to model themselves on good teachers who taught them. The memories of good teachers and the desire to emulate them were very powerful. However, it looked as though the college also had some socialising effect, in that students' responses indicated that some of them were explicitly trying to integrate their new knowledge into their vision of themselves as future teachers. This means that some college theories are beginning to be absorbed by the student teachers. Additionally, it was apparent that the personal and the professional characteristics are closely linked in the student teachers' minds. For them, the person you are affects what you do in class. Very clearly, integrating what student teachers enter with into the college curriculum has a place. It is a matter of taking advantage of the programme rationale, which advocates dialogue to help students connect their experiences with the college theories and practices.

Developing themes around images of bad teachers proved difficult, in that student teachers' descriptions of such teachers were not as varied as those of good teachers, and they were more or less mirror-image of the good teachers. However, the main theme was that of the teacher who used excessive corporal punishment. The best that the NTTC can do is to "weed out" bad images of teachers. This could be achieved in many ways. For example, combining ethical issues in teaching with inviting guest speakers from centres such as the "Thaba Bosiu Rehabilitation Centre" meant for alcoholic inmates could be built into the programme.

The description of a teacher who was too sociable was captured in personality traits. The findings show that such teachers were known for drunkenness and smoking in the classroom. The descriptions further show that such teachers were unfair, practised corporal punishment, used abusive language and that they were not particular about personal appearance.

An image of an unprofessional teacher appears to be that of a teacher who punished students. It would seem that a teacher who does not explain clearly, who did not help slow learners and who did not allow free interaction in his classroom, was considered, a poor professional. Related to this image is the effects on pupils. The findings show that

students who were scared to stay in school might have been affected by those teachers who were unprofessional and perhaps harsh.

On the issue of life at the College, the findings show that the student teachers found the College facilities conducive to their learning. They expressed hope that change in education would also come as a result of proper facilities. In other words, the memory they had of primary schools was that the facilities at this level are poor. That they had picked this issue as one of the critical ones suggests that they would like to work in improved facilities.

Regarding the social context, an analysis of the public view as evidenced in the interview with representatives of “Parents in Education Association” and as confirmed by the student teachers themselves, is that there are many demands on teachers. From the point of view of parents, teachers are responsible for the type of student that is produced by the school system. Demands as interpreted by the student teachers who participated in this investigation differ slightly from those of the other respondents. According to the representative of parents, schooling has to go beyond routine work. The challenges in their opinion are of a wide range. For example, impressions from interviewing the “Parents in Education Association” are that education standards are deteriorating mainly because of the type of teacher education provided by the NTTC. There probably is need on the part of the college to investigate national issues about the type of teacher produced by NTTC.

### **4.3 The Future**

The findings on the question about their future suggest that teachers would want to emulate characteristics of their good teachers. Responses captured the terms they used for describing good teachers are similar to those they described themselves in their future role as teachers. Most importantly, the image of a parent came out very strongly. Additionally, they were beginning to use the college jargon especially as they described the effects on learners. Perhaps the college teaching was already influencing their thinking. In reality, some of them were explicitly attempting to integrate their new knowledge into their vision of themselves. This particular finding tends to suggest that teacher educators might find it useful to infuse students’ knowledge upon entry with the content they are to learn during their training. Investigating entry characteristics could be built into the interviews conducted prior to admission. A bank of their views might be used for the teaching.

The student teachers expressed their determination to go back to teaching in the primary schools, but most also indicated they wished to further their studies. This is an interesting finding, though one should note that there few opportunities at present for primary school teachers in Lesotho to upgrade themselves. It is also important that as they think about going back to teach in the primary school, they express enthusiasm about emulating good teachers, just as was found by Williams’ (1998) study, which investigated attrition rate. A

national survey on this issue is of paramount importance as it will inform all concerned particularly the Ministry of Education Planning Unit.

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