Challenges to the Centrality of Teaching Practice in the Student Teachers’ Professional Growth and Competent Classroom Management in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe

BY

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THESIS IN FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN TEACHER EDUCATION

SUBMITTED TO

ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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NOVEMBER 2015
ABSTRACT

The study endeavoured to investigate the nature of student teacher experiences and challenges they faced when doing Teaching Practice (TP). Additionally, the study aimed to propose ways by which problems in Teaching Practice could be overcome to enable teacher educators and students to attain the desired outcomes from teaching practice in a comprehensive and effective manner.

An exploratory-explanatory case study method was used to generate data. An open-ended questionnaire, focus group discussions and document analysis were the data generation instruments used in the study. One hundred and sixteen student teachers, 62 mentors and 20 lecturers filled in open ended questionnaires and 45 student teachers (STs) took part in focus group discussions. Purposive and convenience sampling were employed to select schools, student teachers, lecturers and mentors for participation in the study. Participant, methodological and environmental triangulation was used to improve on the trustworthiness of the study.

The study revealed that a variety of strategies were used by teacher education colleges in preparing student teachers for TP. Nonetheless, TP preparatory strategies were used inefficiently. Time constraints and large group sizes of student teachers were hindrances to the expected total efficiency of the preparatory strategies that were used. Students felt positive about some aspects of being mentored, using Information Communication Technology (ICT) gadgets, some aspects of college and school-based supervision and assessment and supportive school administration. Supervision and assessment by teacher education institutions presented challenges to student teachers in a variety of ways. Most supervisors had limited knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy in early childhood development (ECD) and even the practice of mentoring. Student teachers faced several challenges in the preparation and upkeep of Teaching Practice portfolios as well as in the delivery of units of instruction. Student teachers faced several mentor- and ICT-related challenges. Student teachers’ efforts to apply learnt theory and plans were stifled. The study revealed that several college and host school linked factors caused challenges which student teachers faced when doing Teaching Practice. Among these were the timing of TP. and emphasis on pass rate in tests and examinations in schools.

The study recommends a change in the placement of TP. in teacher education by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development, in collaboration with teacher education colleges, for the purpose of according sufficient preparatory time for TP. so that TP. becomes productive. The study recommends fast tracking in the education of ECD teachers to close the existing gap between expansion in ECD and the required staff. In addition, teachers’ college ICT curriculum needs to be widened to incorporate the development of student teachers’ skills in integrating ICT in their teaching when they are doing TP. as modern times may demand.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am sincerely grateful to my promoter, Doctor John Charema who directed and supervised my study. I acknowledge that in Doctor Charema I had a promoter who was committed to excellence in research scholarship. His expertise was a beacon to my growth in the academic field.

I acknowledge the contributions and support of the Higher Degrees Directorate. I am indebted to Professor Chisaka, Dr. Chikasha and the late Professor Matshazi for giving me the motivation to work through this study. I sincerely thank all the people who participated at the Defence workshops where I made my oral presentations for all their input which contributed to the completion of this study.

I am grateful to Professor Vitalis Chikoko, Professor Wiseman Magwa, and Professor Maxwell Musingafi for their input while the study was still at its proposal stage.

My indebtedness goes to the staff at Zimbabwe Open University for their support in a variety of ways.

I am thankful to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technological Development for allowing me access to their schools and colleges respectively.

I am forever indebted to the research participants. Their contributions were invaluable. My sincere thanks go to Meggie Ngara who typed the bulk of my work and Mrs Janet Banda and Mr Mupfururirwa who did language editing of chapters 4 and 2 of my work respectively. I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Hazel Ngoshi who professionally edited my
whole script for language and other editorial concerns. I am thankful to Dr. Remigious Mangizvo for his input towards the quality of my thesis. I am sincerely grateful to Professor Wiseman Magwa for providing very useful comments and suggestions which were instrumental to the perfection of my thesis.

I express my gratitude to my dear husband Rodgers, to my children, Mufaro, Caroline, Tanyaradzwa, Praise and Joseph, my sisters and brothers for their moral support and encouragement during the course of this study.

Above all, I thank the Almighty Lord Jesus Christ, for making it possible for me to complete this study. May He bless all those who travelled on this academic journey with me.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to: my husband Rodgers Antony, my children, Mufaro, Caroline, Tanyaradzwa and Praise, my grandson Liran, and my parents Clara and Remigious Mangizvo Mutikani.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background to the study, the statement of the problem, purpose and objectives of the study, research questions, ways in which the study is significant, assumptions made in the study, its delimitations and limitations, organisation of thesis and definition of key terms

1.2 Background to the study

Education is widely considered as the key to development. For increased rate of development, it is imperative that teachers who are facilitators of learning be recipients of high quality professional education. Martin Luther (as cited in Singh, 2004) is of the opinion that the prosperity of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenues or on the strength of its fortification, nor on the beauty of its public buildings; but it consists in the number of its people of education, enlightenment and character; here are to be found its true interest, its chief strength and its real power. Thus education is important in the lives of citizens of any country. Singh (2004, p.14) appropriately argues that, “The destiny of a nation is shaded in classrooms.” Teacher education is then critical as it contributes to individual and national development by educating teachers. Furthermore, Singh (2004) is of the opinion that the progress of a country depends upon the quality of teachers and for this reason teaching is said to be the noblest of all professions. Therefore, improving teacher quality is a key ingredient for improving our nation’s schools.

Teaching Practice (TP) is one of the components of teacher education and development. Generally speaking, Teaching Practice is an indispensable element in the development of
the professional competence of a student teacher (ST). If properly done, the TP experience gives student teachers the opportunity to apply theories to practice, the chance to learn the skills, values and attitudes of effective teachers and the chance to gain confidence before being fully qualified professionals (Chiromo, 2007). Through TP, stakeholders such as teacher educators, cooperating classroom teachers and school administrators are able to determine and improve the quality of the teachers. The aim behind Teacher Education is the production of effective professional teachers. TP affords educators of teachers to answer with some justification the question, “Can the student teacher teach adequately before she/he is eventually considered fully educated, or takes the teaching job full time?” TP enables educators to know the student teachers firsthand while at the same time affording teacher educators the opportunity to keep in touch with what goes on in schools and what takes place in the classroom.

In Zimbabwe, teacher education has employed several patterns since independence. However, in 1980, there were seven primary school teachers’ colleges and one secondary school teachers’ college for the black sub-system and one teachers’ college educating both primary and secondary school teachers for White, Asiatic and Coloured people (Chiromo, 2007). University educated teachers for both sub-systems were produced by the local University of Rhodesia. The annual teacher output from these institutions was about 1500 (Gatawa, 1998). Colleges were associated institutions of the University of Rhodesia which was responsible for professional standards and student certification. The Associate College Centre was a department within the Faculty of Education and was responsible for teacher education. The teacher education programmes were three years in duration and TP. periods were remarkably short, (Gatawa, 1998 and Chiromo, 2007).
At the time of independence, there was massive increase in school enrolments and so the mode of educating teachers in Rhodesia could not cope with the new demands in Zimbabwe. Consequently, innovations in teacher education were introduced (Chanakira, 1998 and Mukwati, Kajawu, Kanyowa, Pfukani, Chikwanda, Rwezuva, Mukabeta & Mbirimi, 2000). It was at this point that the Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) was introduced. ZINTEC colleges were established in four regions; Morgan Zintec, Gwanda Zintec, Marymount Zintec and Andrew Louw Zintec colleges. This programme educated teachers on the job (Mukwati, et al., 2000)). Having the ability to give student teachers the benefit of long classroom teaching experience was one key merit of the ZINTEC programme. The methods of education included face to face lectures, assignments, Teaching Practice, Distance education, Research and Counselling services. Since its inception, the ZINTEC programme has passed through three phases, (Chiromo, 2007, p.56). The first phase (1981-1988), in which eleven intakes were produced, was structured thus;

First residential phase - 4 months

Practical Teaching 40 months

Final Residential - 4 months

In the second phase (1988-1996), in which five intakes (12-16) were produced, the structure was modified as follows;

First Residential phase - 8 months

Practical Teaching 32 months

Final Residential - 8 months
In the third phase (1997-to present), which started with intake 17, the first residential phase is 8 months, Teaching Practice 20 months and the final Residential phase 8 months. This model of education is commonly known as the 2-5-2 paradigm, (Chiromo, 2007).

The ZINTEC mode of education (the 2-5-2 paradigm) is the one now operative in colleges educating primary school teachers in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Government adopted the 2-5-2 model to have a more practical approach in the development of teachers. This model is advantageous in that student teachers get the benefit of long classroom teaching experience and mentors can give more help to trainee teachers who would be attached to them for much longer time. Another recent development in the education of primary school teachers in Zimbabwe which was influenced by the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission of 1999 was the introduction of the education of Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers in the primary school education colleges and universities. The first intake of ECD student teachers at teachers’ colleges was in 2007. Currently no comprehensive research has been done to find out about student teacher TP experiences after the introduction of these changes in teacher development in Zimbabwe. Other than the education of primary school teachers, there are patterns of education for secondary school level, pre-primary and for students with special needs such as the physically and mentally disabled. The current mode of Teacher Education programme in Zimbabwe resembles what Perraton (as cited in Chiromo, 2007) calls the sandwich model in the sense that in a three-year course, the Teaching Practice phase is sandwiched between two periods of residential courses or phases. This type of block Teaching Practice is advantageous in that the student develops wholesomely as the student teacher assumes the full range of duties a qualified teacher would normally do. Nonetheless, the lengthy duration of the TP
may be a source of demotivation if student teachers come to a time when they are no longer learning any new things about teaching when doing TP.

A major review of teacher education in Zimbabwe came under the recommendations of the Teacher Education Review Committee Report (TERC) in 1986. Dyanda and Hapanyengwi (1997) as cited in Zindi, Nyota, and Batidzirai, (2003) say that under the scheme of association, the individual colleges and the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Zimbabwe, have taken the initiative to improve and choose their curriculum especially in the skills area. For instance, Section IV-Professional Studies (P.S) for primary colleges, has seen the introduction of three syllabi namely Syllabus’ A’, ‘B’ and ‘C.’ According to the TERC report (1986) section IV which is the Professional Studies (P.S) is the section whose business is about general principles of teaching and learning. Syllabus’ A’ in P.S. is a general teaching and professional preparation syllabus where students are taught non-subject specific skills such as scheming, planning, lesson delivery and other general teaching skills (Zindi, et al., 2003 and Mukorera, 1997). It is believed that without this theoretical base, the student may not be able to function effectively when deployed to teach. Syllabus ‘B’ focuses on teaching skills that are subject specific including upgrading of the content where necessary, especially in subjects like Music and Art and Physical Education that would not have provided student teachers with adequate curricular content during their ‘O’ level studies. In syllabus ‘C’ each student chooses one primary school curriculum subject in which ones carries out a research project (Zindi, et al., 2003). Currently, emphasis is on carrying out action research and this activity begins while students are on TP and at this time student teachers are expected to identify a learning or teaching problem. They are expected to investigate the problem and apply some action
which is meant to rectify the identified problem and then report on the effectiveness or otherwise of the action. Professional Studies is one of the four sections in primary school teacher college structures. One of the other three sections of the teacher education syllabus is Practical Teaching or Teaching Practice. Practical teaching involves doing teaching practice in all the subjects in the primary school curriculum in the case of primary school student teachers. In the case of secondary school student teachers it involves doing teaching practice in two subjects a student teacher specialises in. The other section is Theory of Education which covers disciplines such as Sociology of Education, Educational Psychology, Philosophy of Education and Curriculum Studies. In primary school teacher education, the fourth section is academic study of some selected academic subjects such as Mathematics, English, Art and Design (Mukorera, 1999 and Chiromo, 1999). The study of academic subjects provides a foundation for further academic pursuance and equips the student teacher with some sound level of subject mastery.

On deployment, the student teacher is attached to a co-operating qualified teacher or mentor who is tasked with assisting the trainee teacher in mastering techniques of teaching. The mentor is supposed to be a professional who assists the student teacher progressively in their day to day life while on TP (Chiromo, 2007). This form of practice is referred to as Attachment Teaching Practice (ATP). The primary school student teacher is attached to a class teacher while secondary school student teachers are attached to subject specialists. The mentors are expected to share their teaching loads with the student teachers. The student teacher is expected to learn skills of teaching through observation, imitation and practice. According to Shumbayaonda (2012) mentors are sometimes unwilling to assess student teachers because the role of assessor appears to contradict the supporting role of
the mentor. In her study, Chakanyuka (2003) found out that mentors in Zimbabwe schools
did not give honest assessments as they felt that in doing so they would destroy the
mentee’s confidence. While on TP student teachers are supervised. Student teachers should
be effectively supervised by all concerned, TERC (1986). Supervision is a joint
responsibility of many players and the most important supervisors are the college lecturers
and the mentors or in-school supervisors.

There are some merits in the way Teaching Practice is done in Zimbabwe in the education
of primary school teachers. The 2-5-2 model gives student teachers adequate exposure to
the world of educational reality as they spend five full consecutive school terms doing
Teaching Practice. In addition, the student teachers benefit tremendously if mentors
demonstrate ideal teaching and professional skills, values and attitudes. Nonetheless, there
are challenges student teachers face while on TP Lynd (2005) argues that teacher
development has been riddled with innumerable problems such as irrelevant curricula,
reluctance to incorporate new knowledge and technology and poor handling of teaching
practice by teacher educators.

Teaching Practice by prospective teachers is also done in other countries. For instance,
different teacher education programmes are offered in Pakistan, Malawi, South Africa,
Tanzania and Zambia (Gujjar, Naoreen, Saif & Bajwa, 2010, Masaiti & Marichishi, 2011
and University of Dar es Salaam School of education Teaching Practice regulations and
procedure revised version, 2008). Supervision of student teachers on TP is generally done
collaboratively by teacher educators, school staff and external examiners. However, in
South Africa, Tanzania, Pakistan and Zambia student teacher Teaching Practice is shorter
than in Malawi and Zimbabwe. Short periods of TP may not provide adequate exposure to
the student teachers.

A study by Nyagah (1993) on, “Problems facing teacher education in Kenya”, established
that supervision of student teachers began when the Teaching Practice period was far gone
and so it took unnecessarily too long a time for students to reverse the “wrongs” some of
which they had done at the behest of their mentors.

While on Teaching Practice, some students were overworked, lacked proper induction at
host schools and there were uncordial relationships between student teachers and the
mentors and at times with the administration (Feimen– Nemser (1992),), and Nyagah
(1993). It was against this backdrop that this study was conducted.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Basing on some supervision experiences of the researcher, it appears pre-service students
face some challenges during teaching practice, such as failing to interpret school
curriculum and seemingly being subjected to conflicting advice from their supervisors and
members of staff from hosting schools. It would appear as though there are gaps in the
preparation of student teachers for TP by Teachers’ Colleges and there seems to be lack of
collaboration between stakeholders in TP.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The study endeavoured to ascertain the nature of student teacher experiences and problems
they faced when doing Teaching Practice. In addition the study aimed to propose ways by
which problems in teaching practice could be overcome to enable teacher educators and
student teachers to attain the desired outcomes from teaching practice in a comprehensive
and effective manner.
1.5 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- establish the nature of experiences and challenges faced by student teachers doing TP in the Midlands province, Zimbabwe
- identify factors contributing to challenges faced by student teachers during TP
- determine the appropriateness and adequacy of college preparatory strategies that are used to prepare student teachers for TP
- establish host school related challenges faced by STs and determine their effect on the operations of student teachers
- ascertain the aspects of TP student teachers felt positive about
- determine areas in which student teachers were better and less prepared for TP
- provide suggestions that could be used to produce guidelines for the provision of quality Teaching Practice in Zimbabwe.

1.6 Research questions

1.6.1 Main research question

What are the problems encountered by student teachers during Teaching Practice and what are their causes?

1.6.2 Sub –research questions

- What aspects of their practicum do the student teachers feel positive about?
- What educator-linked problems are faced by these student teachers?
- What host-school-related challenges do student teachers face and how are the operations of the student teachers affected by the perceived challenges?
• How appropriate and adequate are college TP strategies?
• Why do student teachers face challenges during Teaching Practice?
• In which areas are student teachers better prepared and less prepared for Teaching Practice?
• How can colleges in collaboration with host schools make Teaching Practice a more fruitful experience for student teachers?

1.7 Justification of the study
The study was conducted at a time when there had been significant changes in primary teacher development such as the introduction of the 2-5-2 model of developing primary school teachers and the introduction of the development of Early Childhood Development for teachers in teacher education colleges. The study would be instrumental in determining problems faced by student teachers which were linked to these recent changes. At the time the study was carried out no comprehensive research had been done to find out challenges faced by student teachers after the introduction of these changes in teacher development in Zimbabwe.

The researcher was also aware that the findings of this study might apply to relevant higher teaching and learning institutions throughout Zimbabwe since the institutions could glean useful information from this study. It was hoped that the study would raise teacher educators’ insights into the nature of problems and causes of problems students faced while on TP. The researcher hoped that the study would add to literature in the area of teacher education, particularly TP.

It is the obligation of most responsible governments to assist meaningfully in teacher education, often by way of giving financial and other relevant support. As the study
provides some account on student challenges while on teaching practice, the Zimbabwe government could get some basis upon which it could establish loopholes in teacher development programmes which manifest themselves in student TP-linked problems and resolve them.

1.8 Assumptions

It was assumed that students on Teaching Practice faced challenges. It was further assumed that the challenges faced by students were teacher education-institutions and host-schools related. In addition, it was assumed that TP would continue to be important and to be done in teacher education in Zimbabwe. The researcher also assumed that she would get cooperation from school authorities and the research participants.

1.9 Delimitation

The study was conducted in 36 primary schools only in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe, out of which 11 were rural and 25 were urban. It only involved two primary school teacher education institutions in the Midlands province in Zimbabwe only.

Only 161 students on Teaching Practice, 20 lecturers and 62 mentors at host schools participated in the study. The study involved participants in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development only. The focus of the study was on evaluating the current state of Teaching Practice of student teachers for the purpose of establishing challenges faced by student teachers while on TP only.
1.10 Limitations

The study was conducted in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe and over the third school term of 2013 and first school term of 2014 only and so it was a snapshot dependent on conditions prevailing at the time data were gathered. Such confines could affect the trustworthiness and dependability of the findings. However such fears were controlled by observing what the researcher raised on the validation of the research methods in Chapter 3. Much care was taken in describing and following methodological procedures used in this study which were meant to enhance trustworthiness and dependability of the research findings. Researcher subjectivity was a limitation in this study. To mitigate the issues of researcher subjectivity, colleagues were, for example, requested to improve on the research data generating tools which the researcher designed and some students were asked to read through the findings that the researcher had made and made a verification of findings. Furthermore, triangulation, member-checking, capturing of direct statements made by participants and thick descriptions were used to mitigate possible subjectivity.

1.11 Organisation of the thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter One focuses on the setting of the research problem, exposing the research questions, purpose of the study, the significance of the study, its limitations and delimitations, the research methodology and design to be used and organisation of the thesis.
Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Chapter Two covers the essence of the theoretical framework chosen to guide the study and the conceptual framework. It covers an in depth study of current literature on teacher education, particularly student-teacher teaching practice or practicum.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design

Chapter Three focuses on the research paradigm, design and methodologies adopted for the study.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion

Chapter Four presents the analyses, discussions and interpretations of the research data.

Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter Five concludes the study by giving meanings of the findings of the study by way of providing conclusions based on the study. It also covers recommendations.

1.12 Definition of key terms

Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is an opportunity given to pre-service student teachers to gain professional experience and ethics so that they become socialised into the teaching profession. A number of terms such as “practice teaching, student teaching, teaching practice, field studies, in field experience, school based experience or internship are used to refer to teaching practice” (Gujjar, et al., 2010, p. 303, citing Taneja, 2000). Teaching
practice is a culminating experience in teacher preparation (Gujjar, Naureen, Saifi & Bajwa, 2010).

**Teaching Practice Experiences**

These are things happening to student teachers, during the period of teaching at a school under supervision, through exposure, be they delights or challenges.

**Teacher Educators**

These are professional educators with relevant arts and behaviours which facilitate student-teacher learning directly or otherwise.

**Student Teachers**

These are prospective teachers in the making.

**Teaching Practice Challenges**

Problems faced by student teachers while doing their practicum, which may adversely, affect their operations and ultimately the overall quality of their education.

**1.13 Acronyms**

TP-Teaching Practice or Practice of teaching

ECD-Early Childhood Development

ZINTEC-Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course

ATP-Attachment Teaching Practice

TERC- Teacher Education Review Committee
ST/s-Student teacher/s

ICT-Information communication technology

HATP-Home Area Teaching Practice

1.14 Summary

This chapter has presented the introduction of the entire study. In so doing, the background to the study and the research problem have been given. Teaching Practice is a component of teacher education and development and it is indispensable in the development of the professional competence of a student teacher. Different teacher development systems use different models. Teaching Practice is a critical component in most of these models. In a number of settings, however, some problems seem to be affecting teacher education in general and Teaching Practice in particular. The chapter also presented the research problem, objectives of the study and research questions. The chapter gave a summary of the research strategy that was followed by the researcher. Finally, the structure and organisation of the study was presented. The next chapter looks at review of related literature.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter an exploration of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the study is given. The concept Teaching Practice or Practicum is covered. The chapter then reviews related literature under the subheading related studies, based on the research questions stated in the introductory chapter.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The Educational Systems theory, which developed from the General Systems theory, was chosen to guide the research. The Systems theory was developed in the 1930s by Ludwig von Bertalanffy as a rigorous method of describing the structure and mechanisms of complex systems Cole (2007). Systems mean complexes of elements standing in interaction (Banathy, 1991, Cole, 2000 and Stoner, et.al, 2009, citing Bertalanffy, 1968). The Systems theory posits that the activity of “any segment in an organisation affects, in varying degrees the activity of every other segment” (Stoner, et.al, 2009 p. 72). When elements in a system “do not support each other then the system cannot focus on total quality operations” (Smit & de Cronje, 1999, p. 64). In the 1960’s Maccia and Maccia developed and formalised an educational systems theory (Thompson, 2005). The teacher, student, content, and context are taken as forming a system of education (Steiner, 1988). The Educational Systems theory focuses on the arrangement of and relations between these parts which connect them into a whole and focuses on their interrelationships or affect relations (Frick, 1996). A teacher is one who guides the learning of another. In the
educational systems theory, teaching is a relationship between two persons, one of whom guides the other who follows (Frick, 1996). Teaching relationships can exist among several pairs of persons. The most desirable kind of teaching-learning affect relation is one in which one person intentionally guides another who wants to learn (Steiner, 1988). Content is that which is to be learned. There are both student-content, and teacher-content affect or influence relations. Context is the setting in which learning occurs. Typical contexts of present-day formal educational systems include learning rooms, principals, local community, furniture modern technology and state departments of education (Magolis, 1999).

The Educational Systems theory was chosen as all the elements in the educational systems theory and their interaction in the educational system can contribute to or influence the essence of student-teacher experiences and challenges faced by students doing teaching practice. Some students’ positive experiences and problems may be connected to the teacher educators, mentors and practices prior to and during TP. It is possible that the places at which the student teachers practised could contribute to some problems students could be facing. Some challenges could be specific to individual STs. Thus, the researcher chose the educational systems theory because the components in the education system are all viewed as critical in the attempt to investigate the nature of student experiences and problems faced by the student. The relationships among the subsystems in the education of student teachers are regarded as useful in trying to determine the forms and causes of problems student teachers face when doing Teaching Practice.
2.3 Conceptual framework

2.3.1 The concept teaching practice or practicum in teacher education

2.3.1.1 The essence of practicum

In teacher education practicum is commonly known as teaching practice or the practice of teaching. According to Gujjar, Naoreen, Saifī and Bajwa (2010, p. 340) Teaching Practice “is the name of the preparation of student teachers for teaching by practical training.” It refers to the “practical, school-based elements of initial teachers’ education programmes” (Report of a Peer Learning Activity (PLA, 2009 p.3). The duration of Teaching Practice tends to vary from country to country.

2.3.1.2 Objectives of practicum in teacher education

According to Akbar (2002) as cited by Gujjar, et.al., (2010, p. 340), the following are Teaching Practice objectives:

- “to provide the prospective teachers with an opportunity of establishing appropriate teacher-pupil relationship,
- to provide an opportunity for evaluating the student potential as a teacher and suitability for the teaching profession,
- to develop personal relationship with others, administrators, teachers, parents and students or pupils,
- to provide student teachers with an opportunity to put theories into practice and develop a deeper understanding of educational principles and their implications for learning,
• to enable the student teachers effectively, to plan and prepare lessons,
• to develop skill in the fundamental procedures, techniques and methods of teaching,
• to develop desirable professional interests, attitudes and ideas relative to teaching practice,
• to provide an opportunity to student teachers to have their teaching evaluated and to gain from the benefits of criticism,
• to provide an opportunity to liaison with school environment, its functioning and with community and its resources,
• to provide for the exchange of ideas and methods between practising school and the training institutions, and
• to provide training in all activities which student teachers are going to perform in future during their job as professional teachers.”

According to the Report of a Peer Learning Activity (2009, p. 4) the objectives of teaching Practice include allowing the student teacher to:

• “observe models of good professional practice,
• learn how to engineer effective learning environments,
• start to discover what it is really like to be a teacher in mind, body and soul,
• experience reality, real schools and real teachers,
• begin a career-long habit of experimentation and reflection to discover what works or does not work for them and the learners and why, this will include taking risks in a supportive environment and in an authentic setting, and
• begin to build their professional identity and gain self-confidence as a teacher and learn to act in accordance with professional values and codes of ethics.”

The researcher’s experience is that the objectives of Teaching Practice in the Teacher education institutions are generally similar to those cited by to Akbar (2002) and “Report of a Peer Learning Activity” (2009). In support of these views, Ulvick and Smith (2011, p. 523) say, “The main objective of the practicum is to provide student teachers with authentic hands-on-experience, in teaching. This is needed to develop their teaching skills and to start collecting experiences to enrich their professional wisdom.” The role of TP is to “provide a supported entry to the profession of teaching” so that what student teachers experience creates their views of the profession” (Ulvick & Smith, 2011, p. 521, citing Korthagen et al., 2006). To this researcher, the objectives of Teaching Practice must be continuously considered if there is to be sincerity or quality about TP. In this study, student teacher experiences and difficulties were investigated with the objectives of TP in mind.

2.3.1.3 Factors and conditions that make teaching practice effective

There are several variables that contribute to effective student-teacher practicum. Ensuring that every student teacher is exposed to diverse types of school management styles, pupil and teacher contributes to effective TP. Peer learning can be a useful way to encourage reflective action among student teachers (Su, 1992 and Maldevez, 2002). TP can be made effective if minimum learning outcomes for each period of practicum are clearly defined by the Teacher Education institution in discussion with student teachers. Student teachers should be adequately challenged by their assignments and adequately supported by mentors to meet with challenges (Report of a Peer Learning Activity, 2009, p. 5).
2.3.1.4 Criteria for successful practicum experience

There are some criteria that make Teaching Practice of good quality. Some of the criteria as established by Ulvick and Smith (2011, p. 530) in their study on “What characterises a good practicum in teacher education?” are:

• Good climate—students need emotional support and a practicum environment in which they feel safe and are able to take risks
• Good relationship with mentor is a main priority
• Student teachers want to survive in the classroom and to receive a positive assessment of their teaching
• Quality communication and shared understanding of goals among all parties involved is a key criterion for a successful TP experience
• Giving student teachers opportunity to experience the comprehensive teacher role is a characteristic of a good practicum
• Organising tutorials for students while they are doing TP.

The current study is linked to this information on variables that add to effective student teacher practicum since the present study examines circumstances that influence student teacher experiences and difficulties when doing TP.

2.3.1.5 Preparatory techniques prior to TP

Micro-teaching

In addition to lectures, the student teachers have in the several disciplines in their teacher education curriculum, micro-teaching is one of the key TP preparatory techniques used. Micro-teaching is a teacher education technique which helps the student teacher to master teachers’ skills. “Micro-teaching is a teacher training technique which provides student
teachers an opportunity to perk up their teaching skills by improving the various simple tasks called teaching skills” (Remesh, 2013, p 158). Micro-teaching usually requires the student teacher to teach a single concept of content, using a specified teaching skill, to a very small group of pupils for a short time. So it can be defined as an education context in which a teacher’s situation has been reduced in scope (Kilic, 2010). Micro–teaching helps to “develop skills to prepare lesson plans, choose teaching objectives, speak in front of a group, as questions and use evaluation techniques” (Kilic, 2010, p. 82).

According to Remesh (2013, p. 161) several stages or steps are usually followed in micro-teaching and these usually are as follows:

Step 1 – A particular skill to be practised is made clear to the student teachers.

Step 2- The educator gives a demonstration of the skills.

Step 3- The student teacher plans a short lesson plan on the basis of the demonstrated skill

Step 4– Student teaches the lesson to a small group of pupils while the lesson is supervised by educator and other student teachers. The lesson is videotaped or audio recorded.

Step 5 – “Feedback is given on the recorded, observed lesson pointing out strengths and weaknesses” (Wahba, 2003, p.44).

Step 6- In the light of the feedback given, the student teacher-plans the lesson for the purpose of using the skill in a more effective manner in the second attempt.

Step 7- The revised lesson is taught to another comparable group of pupils.

Step 8 – The supervisors observe the retaught- lesson and give re-feedback

According to Kilic (2010, p. 83 citing Lang, et al., 2005) stages of micro –teaching consist of “pre- observation, observation-note taking, analysis-strategy, viewing tapes and self-evaluation of teacher candidate stages.” Thus the general steps in micro-teaching are “Plan
There are several merits or forms of rationale for micro-teaching. “Besides being an effective technique for professional growth, micro-teaching as tool for reflection helps teacher to scrutinise their own teaching in order to discover their strengths and weaknesses,” (Whba, 2003 p.44). It is effective in developing and sharing certain teaching skills and getting rid of mistakes. It promotes understanding of critical behaviours in classroom teaching and adds to the self confidence of the student teacher (Kilic, 2010 citing Ananthakrishnan, & Remesh, 1993) Micro-teaching is a technique for personality development and confidence building. According to Remesh (2013) and Singh (2004) while micro-teaching is skill oriented, content is not emphasised and a large number of STs cannot be given the opportunity for planning and re-teaching and special classrooms settings are required and their preparation is time consuming. Thus there may arise administrative problems. Time remains the major hurdle in micro-teaching and this results in only some of the skills being practised and not all students are given an opportunity for replanning and re-teaching and the “training becomes ineffective unless the student acquires the quality of student teaching” (Remesh, 2013, p. 161).

There are some factors that contribute to effective micro-teaching. Thorough preparation by the educator and ST is key to the success of micro-teaching. Covering all key teaching skills such as questioning, explaining, illustrating with examples, stimulus variation, reinforcement, classroom management and using educational media is also important in making micro-teaching effective (Allen, 1969). Use of modern technology adds value to micro-teaching. Video tapes and audio-recorders are handy (Kilic, 2010). Participation by
educators and student teachers is crucial for the purpose of promoting reflective teaching. The student teachers should each be given a chance to re-teach. Thus, learner-centred micro-teaching models should be employed to enhance effectiveness.

The researcher’s experience is that micro-teaching is done by students before they go for T.P. Usually students are divided into groups according to their specialist subjects and they go to neighbouring schools to do their micro–teaching. Due to constraints of time and large enrolments some students do not get the first chance to micro-teach and very rarely do student teachers get the opportunity to re-plan and re-teach.

**Peer Teaching**

“Peer teaching is a two way reciprocal learning activity. It can be described as a way of moving beyond independent to interdependent or mutual learning” (Boud, et al., 2002, p. 1). It involves sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience between participants. It is not a single practice and it covers a wide range of different activities each of which can be combined with others (Boud, et al., 2002.)

The researcher’s experience is that for the purpose of preparing student teachers for Teaching Practice, peer teaching involves students in the same year group and those studying the same main subject, forming partnerships to assist each other with teaching skills and course content. Peer teaching builds on the belief that “to teach is to learn twice” (Whitman, 1998, p. 1).

The benefits of peer teaching are that, “Students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities in which they can learn from peers. They develop skills in organising and planning activities, working collaboratively with others, giving and receiving feedback and evaluating their own learning” (Boud, et.al., 2002, p1).
If practices in peer teaching are introduced in an ad hoc way students may become confused about what they are supposed to be doing they miss the opportunity for learning and fail to develop the skills expected of them (Boud, et.al., 2002).

This information on micro-teaching and peer teaching was related to the study, as it would help in explaining whether student experiences while on Teaching Practice were in some ways linked to the way students were prepared for TP.

2.3.1.6 Strategies in teaching for professional growth during teaching practice

Mentoring

Research has found out that school-based mentoring is one of the most powerful sources of influence on student teachers (Hobson & Malderez, 2002). Mentoring can be defined as a developmental relationship in which a more experienced or a more knowledgeable person is paired with a less knowledgeable person to help them to develop professional experience (Calla, 2006). It is concerned with the building of a dynamic relationship in which the personal characteristics, philosophies and priorities of the individual members interact to influence, in turn, the nature, direction and duration of the eventual relationship (Ngara & Ngwarai, 2012, citing Cooper & Palmer, 2000). Mentoring can then be viewed as a human relationship where one person invests energy time and personal know-how by offering help, guidance, advice and support to help the mentee to acquire skills and knowledge relevant to their career or professional development. Similarly, in teacher education mentoring is, “a situation whereby a regular certified professional staff member of a school is assigned a student teacher for grooming and professional development” (Chauraya, 2006, p.399).
In teacher education, mentoring serves quite a number of purposes of which some of the key ones are, skills enhancement through advancing the personal and educational growth of mentee and bridging the gap between theory and practice. Cultivating right attitudes, nurturing the mentee in self-sufficiency and facilitating the mentee in becoming a colleague are other purposes of mentoring in teacher education (Adey, 1997, Evans & Abbott, 1997 and Ngara & Ngwarai, 2012). In support of this, Report of a Peer Learning Activity (2009, p. 6) states the tasks of a mentor in teacher education as follows:

- “assisting the student teacher to integrate into the school community,
- modeling a range of effective teaching behaviours,
- providing a safe environment in which the student teacher can take risks and learn,
- helping the student teacher to plan and assess their impact upon learners,
- observing the student teachers’ practice and providing constructive feedback and feed forward to improve their performance,
- coaching to help student teacher improve practical teaching competency,
- assisting student teacher to reflect constructively upon their own performance
- challenging the student teacher’s assumptions, encouraging the student teacher to reflect upon education in its broadest sense and
- provide a scaffolding and helping to break the complex classroom down into pieces that the student teacher can manage so that they retain a sense of control and is therefore less stressed.”

In line with these views on mentor roles, Furlong and Maynard (1995) say that the expected duties of the mentor in teacher education can be distinguished according to phases in the mentoring relationship with the student. In the first phase the role of the
mentor is model showing, demonstrating to the student the right way of approaching professional issues (Calla, 2006). In the second phase, the role of the mentor is that of a coach since the mentor observes and gives feedback to the student teacher whom they observe teaching. In the third phase the mentor is a critical friend who encourages the student to reflect on their teaching and in the fourth phase the mentor becomes a co-engineer (McIntyre & Hagger, 1994 and Furlong & Maynard 1995). These roles fit quite well into some models of mentoring which are the apprenticeship, competency and reflective model. In the apprenticeship model the mentee is expected to work alongside the mentor and emulate the experienced practitioner (Chakanyuka, Nyuke & Mukeredzi, 2006). In the competency model, learning to teach involves practical training on a number of pre-defined competencies involving coaching on agreed behaviours (Evans & Abbott, 1997). In the reflective model, mentor support involves meaningful reflective thinking on procedures and activities for the purposes of identifying failures and strengths and trying to offer explanations for success or otherwise. While these models each have distinctive characteristics, in practice they compliment each other. In a mentoring relationship in teacher education, mentoring strategies involve learning from the mentor’s practice, learning from the student’s own practice and learning from collaborative teaching with the mentor (Chakanyuka, Nyuke & Mukeredzi, 2006). The complex nature of mentoring in advent implies many roles of mentor some of which are being a teacher, counsellor, role model, networker empowering the mentee, a friend and being a bridge between Teacher education institution and Practice school (Calla, 2006). These roles are dependent upon needs of a mentee the mentor’s style or skill (Calla, 2006).
For mentoring of student teachers to be successful, a mentor should meet certain requirements such as being qualified and experienced, having a sound knowledge of the school curriculum, having a proven record of classroom competence and ability to work with someone, being a role model to model teaching practice and provider of regular, clear and constructive feedback (McDonald, 2004, citing Edwards & Collinson, 1999). An effective mentor is open–minded, approachable, has mutual respect and trust, good interpersonal and communication skills (McDonald, 2004, citing Edwards & Collinson, 1999). The mentoring role is complex and it requires preparation and education, (Maynard & Furlong, 1995 and McDonald, 2004). “Often the cooperating teacher receives little if any training and can be resentful toward the student teacher” (Lugton, 2000, p. 4).

There are some perceived challenges and hindrances to mentoring in teacher education. Disabling traits or characteristics of some individual can be a challenge especially when some mentor teachers have little experience with core activities of mentoring or lack a professional culture that favours collaboration and enquiry. Lack of time to achieve optimum mentor supervision and problems of role conflict are possible hindrances to effective monitoring (Evans & Abbott, 1998). Challenges to monitoring hinge on: inadequate mentor education, bad mentor selection, low mentor motivation and inability to practise mentoring ethics (Chakanyuka et al., 2006) and Allen (2002).

For school–based mentoring to be beneficial to student teacher, mentoring should not just be the “responsibility of one individual but the responsibility of the school administrators and mentors need to be given sufficient paid time to develop their mentoring competencies and to do their job well” (Younger & Warrington, 2009, p.183).
The researcher’s experience is that TP is considered a collaborative activity between the teacher education colleges and host schools. Schools appoint some seasoned teachers to mentor student teachers doing TP. Mentoring naturally adds an extra load of work on the mentor but in Zimbabwe mentors do not get any payment for mentoring student teachers.

Information on mentoring in teacher education is critical to the study which partly sought to determine student teacher mentoring related experiences since TP supervision and assessment in Zimbabwe’s teacher education institutions are supposed to be collaborative.

2.3.1.7 Reflective teaching

Reflective teaching is an approach to teaching and learning. It is the “the process of analysing, discussing, evaluating, changing and developing practice by adopting an analytical approach to one’s work” (Minott, 2006, p. 6).

Reflective teaching has two components namely reflection–in-action and reflection–on-action. Reflection-in-action is private, very fast and intuitive and it works as a self-correcting tool when we realise something is not working as it should (Sadeghi, 2013, citing Smith, 2002). Reflection-on-action happens after an action and is at times collegial (as is the case in a mentor-mentee relationship in teacher education) and is systematic. Reflection-in-action is concerned with “thinking about what we are doing in the classroom while we are teaching. This thinking is supposed to shape our teaching” (Sadeghi et.al., 2013, p. 72). It focuses on intentional improvement. According to the researcher’s experience as an educationist and lecturer in teacher education institutions in Zimbabwe, reflective practice is considered as a critical skill which student teachers should acquire and develop. Reflection and evaluation are concepts which are taught in Professional Studies
and in the students’ subjects of specialisation. These concepts are also emphasised in micro and peer teaching. In micro-teaching, for example, students are guided to reflect on what would have transpired in a delivery made by one of the students and some students may be asked to write a diagnostic evaluation of the micro lesson they would have delivered. Then the written evaluations would be read to the whole micro-teaching group and comments will be made on whether the evaluation is informative and diagnostic. Suggestions will be made to help improve on the quality of the evaluation made. However, constraints of time and large enrolments may be a hindrance to such elaborate activities.

Action research is an example of how reflective practices can lead to progressive problem-solving. The researcher’s experience is that the concept of action research is taught in teacher education colleges in Zimbabwe and in all primary school teachers’ colleges student teachers are required to conduct action research. Much of the action research work is done by student teachers while they are doing TP. The assessment of student teachers’ action research contributes to their final assessment and the action research project must be passed for one to be awarded an overall pass.

Generally, the benefits of reflective thinking include gaining a better understanding of learning and teaching styles. Through reflective practice, teachers can improve their effectiveness in the classroom. Reflective practice brings about beneficial challenges to tradition, the recognition of teaching artistry and respect for diversity in applying theory to classroom practice (Minott, 2006). Since reflective practice is generally considered beneficial, this concept is also critical in teacher education. Usually its theoretical concepts are taught to students before they go for practicum and host schools are expected to help the student teachers to develop this skill in their education.
Reflective practice in teacher education has a direct bearing on some objectives of Teaching Practice such as “to provide an opportunity for self-evaluation and discover from strengths and weakness” (Akbar, 2002, p.37) and “allowing student teacher to begin a career-long habit of experimentation and reflection to discover what works or doesn’t work for them and learners and why” (Report of a Peer Learning Activity 2009, p.4). This information on reflective practice links with the study as the study sought to establish the nature of student teacher experiences in relation to the practice of reflective practice.

2.3.1.8 Portfolio

Portfolio development has become a favourite tool used in pre-service Teacher Education (Kaplan, 1998). During Teaching Practice, student teachers are normally expected to create teaching portfolios (Meena, 2009 citing Wray, 2007). “The current expectation of teachers in Australia is that they are able to collect, interpret and use data related to teaching and learning. Digital technologies in schools, such as electronic methods of record-keeping, offer enhanced opportunities for teachers to perform this skill” (Shaw, Pederson, Cooley & Callingham, 2013, p. 71). Portfolios are a collection of student teachers’ Teaching Practice records. The researcher’s experience is that in Zimbabwe’s teacher education institutions portfolios are simply known as Teaching Practice files. The basic contents of TP files are discussed before students go for TP and the researcher’s experience is that this responsibility lies largely in the hands of the TP department. Preparation of TP begins before students go for TP. Portfolios can be designed and kept electronically and they can be kept as hard copies. Portfolios offer a holistic picture of work of the student teacher. Keeping of portfolios facilitates reflective practice among student teachers (Meena, 2009).
Use of portfolios implies a move towards student teachers having a greater responsibility in assessing their achievements and progress (Meena, 2009 citing Elliot and Morris, 1999).

The current study endeavored to get information from student teachers on the experiences as regards the collection, interpretation and use of data linked to their teaching and pupil learning during student teachers’ practicum.

2.3.1.9 Supervision and assessment in teaching practice

Student teacher assessment and supervision are some of the mechanisms which are put in place by teacher educators to make Teaching Practice a beneficial experience to student teachers. The researcher’s experience is that supervision and assessment of students doing TP is a collaborative and continuous activity. Supervision and assessment instruments which are designed by each teachers’ college are used to profile how each student is performing. Student supervision and assessment is normally done by the teacher education institution as well as by mentors and members of the administration at schools where students conduct their practicum. Suitably qualified staff should have the prime role in the assessment of students while on placement (Graham, 2011). Assessment and supervision can be regarded as two sides of the same coin. Usually the ultimate goal of assessment is to determine whether a teacher candidate is suitable to teach learners; while supervision is aimed at developing the student teachers’ teaching competencies in a guided way. In many situations, practical matters compel teacher educators to combine aspects of each of these two activities. In some circles these two terms tend to be used interchangeably. The main purpose of assessment is to help student teacher to learn. “A constitutive professional goal of teacher education is to enable others to become more competent in the professional
practice of teaching” (Rusznyak, 2011, p. 1 citing Morrow, 2007). For this to happen trainee teachers need the right mix of formative and summative assessment, students are assessed formatively to further students’ professional development.

While directly observing student teaching, lecturers and mentors write open ended responses to the lessons. Supervisors’ observations are a useful basis for prompting student teachers to analyse and reflect on their teaching during post-observation reflective discussions.

A student teaching assessment instrument which provides a standardised way for supervisors to jointly profile how each student has progressed professionally should be used during TP (Rusznyak, 2011). “The criteria against which students are assessed should embody those definitive features of teaching that constitute the essence of their professional development,” (Rusznyak, 2011, p. 3). In formative assessment, assessors act as facilitators of professional development. “The purpose of formative feedback on students is to enhance trainee’s own understanding of their own actions, their assumptions, their own reasoning and decisions and their own inventions of new knowledge to fit unique and shifting classroom situations,” Rusznyak (2011, p. 1). Therefore, instruments for the formative assessment of student teachers need to help them understand what they are doing, what they are not doing and what they should be doing in order to teach more effectively. In a study conducted by Rusznyak (2011) involving the use of two assessment instruments it was established that an assessment instrument that portrays teaching as a complex, cognitive practice enables the supervisor to consolidate and reinforce their formative assessment in a more “nuanced way than was possible when she used an assessment instrument with a simple checklist design” (Rusznak, 2011, p. 13). The
checklist design reduces teaching to tallies of action that may not be coherent or appropriate for intended outcomes and cannot substantially contribute to helping student teachers to deepen their understanding of their developing practice.

In summative assessment of student teachers, assessors act as gatekeepers to the profession to determine students’ teaching competencies before they qualify. In undertaking a final assessment of student teachers the actors may include government agencies.

For student TP assessment to be beneficial, assessment should not be seen as a one-off activity but as an activity that runs through the TP and well-designed assessment tools which are correctly interpreted by assessors should be used (Report of a Peer Learning Activity, 2009 and Rusznyak, 2011).

The researcher’s exposure is that student teacher TP supervision and assessment are critical tools in the education of students. The issues of student teacher assessment while on TP discussed in the paragraphs above are linked to the current study which in part seeks to determine student teacher assessment experiences while on TP.

The success or failure of TP depends on the interaction of elements in the educational systems theory. For instance, the college TP preparatory input, mentor and school input have an influence on the effectiveness of TP in general and TP supervision in particular.
2.4 Related studies

2.4.1 Research question 1

What positive aspects do the student teachers feel about their practicum?

McGee (1996) conducted a study titled “Learning to live with Conformity: Student Teachers’ Reaction to Multiple Conformity Factors during Teaching Practice.” The research was carried out at the University of Waikato’s School of education for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of Year Three student Teachers’ final pre-service practicum experience and its value in preparing them as prospective teachers. The participants were 42 third year- student teachers who were taking part in a Realities of Teaching course. The study had the following main objectives:

- “to develop an understanding of those aspects of Teaching Practice experience which were meaningful for the student teachers,
- to develop an understanding of how these meanings changed as the student teachers progressed through the practicum and how the students managed and modified these meanings while working with other significant people in the practicum context and
- to develop an understanding of how the student teacher transferred these meanings into practice” (McGee, 1996, p. 26).

In this study the forty-two students were involved after they had consented to taking part. The sources of information were responses to a questionnaire administered prior to the TP block commencing, which focused on student teacher anticipated feelings about their up and coming practicum. The questionnaire included both closed and open ended items. A
further questionnaire was administered at the conclusion of the TP block and paralleled questions asked in the first questionnaire. The students were requested to “keep a weekly log during the practicum to record their perceptions about teaching practice” (McGee, 1996, p. 28). The log book was formatted with sub-headings to help students to record their experiences. The sub-headings were; the school, the amount and type of work, expectations placed on the student, the learners, student teaching, the associate teacher and contacts with School of Education Staff and others. These sub-headings were considered critical aspects of student teachers’ Teaching Practice.

In relation to study objective one, over half of the student teachers’ log books showed that they reacted positively to conformity to conventions. Of this group conformity was either a non-issue or a natural process for seven students who experienced good rapport with their teaching associates and whose teaching style was compatible with their associates. There were students whose teaching style differed from that of their associates, yet who enjoyed a good rapport and found the opportunity and freedom to experiment with different styles. The other positive report given by the student teachers was that associate teachers gave student teachers the chance to experiment their own new methods. “What seemed clear was that good rapport between associate teacher and student opened the way for experimenting and made conformity more acceptable situation for student teacher” (McGee 1996, p. 25). In this study, some students viewed some lecturer visits as fantastic since lectures were considered as encouraging.

The researcher opined that her study was linked to this previous study which also sought to determine the positive views of experiences student teachers’ might have about their practicum. The use of open-ended questions in gathering data was also done in this study.
The use of logs to capture their experiences added to the credibility and comprehensiveness of findings of the study. While this study was carried out with students at the School of Education at the University of Waikato in New Zealand, the current study was conducted in Zimbabwe in the Midlands Province.

A study by Moran, Vozzo, Reid, Pietsch, and Hatton (2013) titled, “How Can Technology Make This Work? Pre-Service Teachers, Off Campus Learning and Digital Portfolios” reports “difficulties and benefits of an inter-university project requiring pre-service primary teachers to construct professional digital portfolios using the support of ICT” (Moran et al., 2013, p.121). The project was conducted over 12 months, involving 34 students and seven academics. Student teacher participants were from three universities in New South Wales, two situated in country towns and one in Sidney. Data were collected primarily through a variety of qualitative methods such as observations during tutorials, conferences and discussion, surveys after their instructional sessions and then analysis and assessment of the pre-service teachers’ ‘work samples of the e-Portfolios’ (Moran et al., 2013, p. 123). The student teachers were taught and supported through a combination of inter-university groups and individual instruction. The key strategies used were:

- An initial inter-university video-conference involving discussion of the lecture content, introductions of group members and an interactive session in learning how to use the ICT skills needed for Skype, Weebly and Word features.
- Discussion during or directly after practicum experiences in pairs or groups.
- Discussion of finished e-portfolios by pre-service teachers (Moran et al., 2013, p.123).
The general guide required the finished e-Portfolios to consist of “a professional profile, a teaching philosophy and seven web pages each of which detailed a professional teaching standard, focus areas and descriptors of the standard, and a justified selection of artifacts relevant to the descriptors” (Moran et al., 2013, p. 123).

The study established that although developing e-Portfolio was made difficult where there was unreliability of broadband connections, student teachers had positive experiences as a result of this action research which was conducted in assisting them to develop e-Portfolio during their TP. Students found the e-Portfolio could be used for much more than displaying their teaching philosophy and evidence for professional teaching standards but it could be used for interviews, transcripts and career progress. The study findings demonstrated that the “pre-service teachers were confident in maintaining and adding up to their e-Portfolios as needed” (Moran et al., 2013, p.124) and suggested that the student teachers have a positive experience in being assisted to develop and in developing e-Portfolios as they expressed the opinion that use of the e-Portfolio enhanced critical ICT skills and pedagogical knowledge, knowledge required by beginning teachers to demonstrate teacher competency.

This action research on the development of e-Portfolios for student teachers is related to this study which also sought to establish the nature of student teacher experiences as regards the building of TP portfolios. Nonetheless, the study by Moran et al., (2013) was an action research study while the current study just sought to determine student teachers’, lecturers’ and mentors’ views on student teacher experiences in developing Portfolios as individuals.
Several studies have been conducted to determine student teachers’ perceptions of their mentoring while on Teaching Practice and some of these studies have found out that student teachers reported positively about their mentoring. A study by Salleh and Tan (2013) titled, “Novice Teachers Learning from Others: Mentoring in Shanghai Schools”, which was based on documentary evidence on the Chinese model of Teacher mentoring, established that the model was effective in emphasising real classroom teaching or pedagogy as it stressed the importance of “teacher learning being located in teachers’ day to day work or job embedded” (Salleh & Tan, 2013, p. 159, citing Lester, 2003) and it involved learning through lesson observations from mentors and fellow teachers and peer lesson observation. The model of teacher mentoring was also conceived to be effective in interrogating both “content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge” (Salleh & Tan, 2013, p. 159) through reflection and inquiry by way of carrying out action research.

The researcher’s view was that while the findings of Salleh’s and Tan’s (2013) study were based mainly on documentary evidence, as the study focused on mentoring, it is linked to this study which was carried out to determine the nature of experiences of student teachers on TP in Zimbabwe regarding their mentoring. Nonetheless, this study focused on student teacher experiences with regard to mentoring models in use in Zimbabwe, so it did not base its findings on documentary evidence but on actual opinions of research participants.

Another related study was conducted by Atputhasamy (2005) titled “Co-operating Teachers as School based Teacher Educators: Student Teachers’ Expectations.” The purpose of the study was to explore the expectations of the student teachers from their cooperating teachers and the type and level of help they received from their cooperating teachers during practicum. The study was carried out with a group of 72 students from “the
2002-2003 cohort of the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) Secondary Programme in Singapore” (Athputhasamy, 2005 p. 5). The students had a varied academic background. Some specialised in humanities, some in sciences, some in mathematics and others in technical subjects. The students had completed the on-campus courses and were getting ready for their one and only practicum before graduation (Athputhasamy, 2005).

The student teachers were asked to write down the areas in which they would like to get help from co-operating teachers as they went for Teaching Practice in schools. The items or aspects given by the teachers were then tabulated and analysed and were used to develop the survey questionnaire (Athputhasamy, 2005). The areas in which student teachers indicated that they needed the assistance of the co-operating teachers were categorised by the researcher into “four areas, namely; help related to the students teachers’ curriculum subjects, assistance linked to classroom management, help related to functioning well in this school environment and assistance related to evaluation of their teaching and feedback” (Athputhasamy, 2005, p. 4.). The survey questionnaire was then administered prior to and after student teachers` practicum to get students’ opinions on the expected and actual help given by the co-operating teachers. The first questionnaire was administered to students in their last tutorial before they went out for TP. The post-practicum questionnaire was sent to the same student teachers electronically using the online Blackboard platform in the last week of the practicum (Athputhasamy, 2005). In both questionnaires, a three-point scale was used in the first questionnaire for student teachers to indicate how they rated the importance of each area in which they expected to be helped by co-operating teacher and in the second questionnaire too for students to indicate the level of help they got from their co-operating teachers. The data were analysed using the SPSS: PC software
(Athputhasamy, 2005). Descriptive statistics were used to identify the areas of help considered important by student teachers and the perceived help provided by the co-operating teachers on selected 20 areas. In relation to the current study’s first research question, the study established that in three areas more than 50% of the student teachers perceived having received sufficient help from the co-operating teachers in;

- Suggesting ways to improve student teaching based on the student’s own performance (59.8%),
- Providing constructive criticism and fair evaluation of student teacher’s teaching (57.6%) and
- Giving student teachers the independence to try out new innovative teaching approaches (57.9%) (Athputhasamy, 2005, pp. 7-9).

The study by Atputhasamy (2013) resonates with the objectives of the current study. The issue of mentoring by co-operating teachers is critical in student teachers’ practicum and the present study also sought to find out and extend knowledge on student teacher’s positive experiences regarding mentoring. Atputhasamy’s study is clearly a combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects and thus mixed research methodology was employed. The current study is qualitative but made use of mere percentages and numbers. Atputhasamy’s study did not report on anything regarding ethical considerations, an aspect which was regarded in this study.

Murphy (2009) carried out a study titled, “Teaching Practice Experiences of Year One Early Childhood Student Teachers in a Field Based Teacher Education Programme.” The aim of the research was to “generate Practicum narratives from stage one early childhood
student teachers” (Murphy, 2009 p. 1). The study required student teachers to reflect on the relationship they developed with their mentoring or associate teachers during their TP and reflect on the experience of having their teaching practice assessed by their visiting University lecturers and to consider the value of setting goals and of applying theory to practice in order to strengthen their TP (Murphy, 2009). Several questions guided the study and among them were the following which relate quite clearly to the current study;

- “How effective are mentoring teachers in enabling student teachers to strengthen their TP?
- How does regular setting of teaching goals contribute to student teachers’ reflections on Practicum?” (Murphy 2009 p. 2).

Two focus group interviews were conducted in 2008 by the researcher. Students were asked to take part in the study through a letter of invitation that informed them of the research themes. Each interview began with a clear direction and an indication of the themes to be explored. Participants were assured of confidentiality. The researcher asked one initial open-ended question and let the stories unfold, utilising prompts and probes linked to the themes of the study (Murphy, 2009). Interviews were audiotaped and scribed and transcribed verbatim.

The study established that positive relationships had developed as regards student mentoring and the Practicum as a whole. 64% of the students reported a positive practicum experience as mentors were perceived as supportive, being committed to the development of a good relationship as evidenced by their having regular meetings with student teachers and offering apt advice (Murphy, 2009 p. 3).
Some aspects on the methodology applied in Murphy’s study, also applied in the current study. The current study also used focus group discussions and relevant principles in using focus group discussion such as those used in Murphy’s study were followed in this study and ethical considerations including participant consent and confidentiality were applied.

Kirbulut, Boz and Kutucu (2012) carried out a study titled “Pre-Service Chemistry Teachers’ Expectations and Experiences in the School Experience Course.” The purpose of the study was to help clarify some realities about the pre-service Chemistry teachers’ expectations and experiences of school experience. In this research, a case study design was used. Data were collected from multiple sources including observations, lesson plans, and semi-structured interviews before and after school experiences. Only six participants were sampled through purposeful random sampling. Kirbulut et al., (2012, p. 43, citing Patton, 1990) justified purposeful sampling since it involves a small sample which enables the “obtaining of in-depth information without time-consuming and effortful investigation of the whole population” (Kirbulut et al., (2012, p.43). In order to ensure trustworthiness of the study, triangulation of sources (semi-structured, interviews, observation checklists, lesson plans), member checking and thick description of the instrument and sample were used (Kirbulut, et.al., 2012). The finding which portrayed student positive opinions about their Practicum was that some student teachers acknowledged Tutor feedback and considered it sufficient and effective. Other negatives related to this study were presented under appropriate research questions in this chapter.

Much of the methodology used in Kirbulut et al’s study also applied to this study, as it was a case study, and purposive sampling was employed and source and participant
triangulation were used for the purpose of heightening the level of trustworthiness of the findings that the study made.

A study titled, “Teaching Practice at the University of Namibia; Views from Student Teachers,” was conducted by Kasanda (1995). The sample comprised 58 student teachers who did a three-week TP in Namibian primary schools. In the opinion of the participants, interpersonal relationships between personnel in the school, including pupils determined success or failure of TP experience. Willing and cooperating pupils contributed to TP success. “Pupils who accepted student teachers contributed to success of the trainees, practicum” (Kasanda, 1995, p. 65). In addition, participants gave guidance from the University lecturers, host teachers and fellow students as a factor contributing to their success. The current study was linked to Kasanda’s study since it also was conducted to determine the aspects of TP students viewed as positive.

Chikunda (2008) carried out a study titled, “Re-orienting Home Area Teaching Practice in a Two-Year Initial Teacher Education Programme.” The purpose of the study was to establish the philosophical orientation of the Home Area Teaching Practice (HATP) and evaluate its worth in the two year initial teacher education programme (Chikunda, 2008, p. 235). The design of the study was evaluative and assessional in nature (Chikunda, 2008). A population of 253 first year students at Mutare Teachers’ college in Zimbabwe who had just completed their HATP was used since the researcher thought that this group was suitable as the students had fresh memory of HATP in their minds. Fifty students responded to a questionnaire and fifteen mentors took part in interviews (Chikunda, 2008, p. 236). While the findings of the study indicated some concerns about HATP (which were given in subsequent sections of this chapter) 92% of the respondents opined that they were
offered the opportunity to observe their mentors or other teachers teach. Only 32% of the students received mentor assistance on scheming and planning and only 12% were assisted by the mentors on how to mark (Chikunda, 2008, p. 237).

Chikunda’s research has relevance to my study since the present study also endeavored to obtain data on student teachers’ positive experiences of their practicum and these students provided some evaluation of their practicum. In Chikunda’s study, no report was given on ethical considerations that were made. While Chikunda’s study was conducted in Zimbabwe, it differed from the current study in terms of scope and geographical delimitations. The current study involved student teachers doing TP as opposed to HATP, and was conducted after some new changes had been introduced in teacher education programmes.

Adie and Barton (2012) conducted a study titled, “Urban Pre-service Teachers’ Conceptions of Teaching in Rural Communities”. The study was designed as a case study to “collect data on the pre-service teachers’ perceptions of teaching in a rural community as a result of a rural and remote practicum completed in 2010” (Adie & Barton, 2012, p. 114). The participants were six pre-service teachers in their fourth and final year of study on their (3 out of 5) 4-week practicum. The study took place in a rural and remote location of central Queensland, Australia. “A case study approach legitimizes the participant perspectives allowing similar experiences to be viewed through multiple lenses” (Adie & Barton, 2012, p. 114, citing Simons, 2009). The analysis drew on the pre-service teachers’ interviews and was supported by comments made by supervising teachers and University liaison Academics. Six pre-service teachers in their fourth and final year of study on their third (out of five) 4-week practicum volunteered to complete this practicum in a rural and
remote location of Central Queensland, Australia (Adie & Barton, 2012, p. 114). They were sent in pairs to three rural towns within the same remote region. Six supervising and two University liaison Academics (ULAs) also volunteered to take part in the study. Participants were involved in “either a telephone interview or face-to-face interviews between the pre-service teachers and researchers on their return to campus” (Adie & Barton, 2012, p. 115). The interview questions were designed to gather data from participants on their opinions about the support provided during the practicum, areas needing improvement and the value participants attributed to the experiences provided. All the six student teachers were of the mind that supervising teachers and ULAs played a valuable role in supervising the students. The students also expressed the view that supervising teachers were instrumental in connecting the pre-service teacher to the local community (Adie & Barton, 2012 p. 115).

The current study has some links with Adie’s and Barton’s study (2012) since the current study sought to determine student teachers’ opinions on the supervisory roles played by mentors and college lecturers during student teacher practicum. This study was a case study like Adie’s.

“Supervisors’ Remarks in Teaching Practice: Perspectives of History Student Teachers” is a study that was carried out by Oppong (2013). The study sought to examine the perspectives of History student teachers on the remarks given by supervisors who were lecturers from their university during TP. In this study, focus group discussions were used with twenty-four students at the University Cape Coast in Ghana, in the final year and penultimate years of graduation to generate data. “Data were presented qualitatively, using thick descriptions” (Oppong, 2013, p. 157). Respondents’ views were not unanimous, but
by and large participants regarded supervisors’ remarks as indispensable in their
development as professional teachers. Some remarks were very constructive and so
students were receptive to them and suggestions helped students in their subsequent
teaching. Participants regarded remarks by their supervisors as informative since the
remarks focused on areas students did well in, such as student subject matter knowledge,
questioning skills and general methods used by students, and suggested areas of
improvement. The informative and constructive nature of supervisors’ remarks gave
students a sense of accomplishment and helped them gain confidence and improve upon
their classroom skill (Oppong, 2013, p. 159).

The current study is related to Oppong’s study since it is also qualitative and a case study
like Oppong’s. The issue of TP supervision was critical in the current study just like in
Oppong’s. Nonetheless, Oppong’s study was carried out involving student teachers only,
while in this study, for programmatic reasons, student teachers, associate teachers and
college lecturers were involved in this current study.

Some positive experiences of student teachers were also reported in a study conducted by
Model: A case study of Student Teacher Learning to Teach in High Schools of
Zimbabwe.” The main purpose behind this research was to come up with a model of
“students’ supervisor that emancipates the student teachers from a traditional learning and
supervisory system and simultaneously makes the student teachers to feel that they have a
chance given them to learn how to each” (Gadzirayi et al., 2006, p. 371). Sixteen college
students, eight school based mentors, four college lecturers and one participant researcher
took part in the study. Fifty students were approached before TP in 2003 and the
researchers offered them a student centered approach to TP supervision, whereby the students collaborated among themselves in learning to teach and collaborated with college lecturers and mentors in the supervision process (Gadzirayi et al., 2006). The guiding principles for the participants were;

- “collaborative inquiry
- reflective practice and
- collegial deliberation” (Gadzirayi, Muropa & Mutandwa, 2006, p. 375).

In this study sixteen students accepted to take part in the study, but on condition that there was not going to be any conflict between blended supervision and the traditional college and school assessment.

Prior to teaching a student teacher identified and explained to the panel an area of teaching they wanted to be assisted or supervised in. The identified area was “Focus”. For example, area of focus could be questioning technique or group management (Gadzirayi et.al., 2006, p. 376). Then there was a pre-lesson collaboration as the team panel beat the intentions of the student if necessary and as the supervision team agreed on supervision criteria to be used. This study just focused on supervision and not assessment. Post lesson discussion was done in view of the agreed criteria and the teaching student was made to self-evaluate and then the rest of them. Written summaries of observations were made and audio and video tape recorders were used to compliment the written reports (Gadzirayi, et.al., 2006, p. 376). The results of this study indicated that student teachers were quite happy about the supervision model that was being tried out. All the sixteen students were of the mind that the following aspects of the model made TP supervision very effective and practical; the
pre-lesson collaboration, establishment of “focus” by a teaching structure and lesson observation being strictly focused on the agreed area. The model was conceived as being able “to help in creating an atmosphere of trust and helped student teachers to gain confidence quickly” (Gadzirayi et al., 2006, p. 380).

Similar to the study by Gadzirayi et al., (2006), the issue of collaboration which is a modern trend in education and teacher education as well was a critical aspect of investigation in the current study. Student teacher collaboration-linked experiences were investigated in this study. While the study by Gadzirayi and others was an action research; the current study surveyed students’ opinions of the collaborative nature of their TP.

2.4.2 Research question 2

What educator linked problems are faced by student teachers?

The area of challenges faced by pre-service teachers while they are doing their Practicum has been of interest to several researchers in number countries.

Gujjar, Naureen, Saifi and Bajwa (2010) carried out a study titled, “Teaching Practice: Problems and Issues in Pakistan.” The purpose of the study was to determine the issues and problems of Teaching Practice in Pakistan and to obtain information on the perceptions of student teachers on the trends of TP in Pakistan. A sample of 25 prospective teachers in the B.Ed programme in public sector institutions in the four provinces of Pakistan from each of the 26 districts took part in the study (Gujjar, Naureen, Saifi & Bajwa, 2010, p. 345). A survey approach was employed. “A twenty-seven item questionnaire was developed out of which seven had the option of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ while the remaining twenty items had three options as ‘Maximum’, ‘To some extent’ and ‘Not always” (Gujjar, Naureen, Saifi &
questionnaires were administered on prospective teachers personally and responses were received promptly. Data were coded and analysed through SPSS XII in terms of percentages and mean scores. The questionnaire design used by Gujjar et al., (2010) had closed items while the questionnaires that were used in the current study were open ended since the study sought to give participants ample room to give their opinions without being directed to respond to some pre-specified aspects related to TP problems. In the present study, questionnaires were administered personally also and were collected promptly to make sure that necessary ethical considerations were adhered to and to obtain a high return of responses. The study by Gujjar et al., was able to establish that student teachers faced some trainer linked problems. The majority of the students opined that their operations during TP were made difficult because their training institutions did not provide them with Manual of rules and regulations of TP before TP and the duration of TP was regarded ‘too short to mean anything to the students as TP duration was just between 4 and 8 weeks long’ (Gujjar et al., 2010, p.357). Supervision was considered wanting on the part of College trainers. Evaluation and assessment criteria were viewed as very formal without much meaning being attached. Comments were given such as “Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, good, very good or just provision of marks or percentages” (Gujjar et al., 2010, p. 358). Thus, to the students the instrument did not portray teaching as a complex, cognitive practice. In a related study by Rusnyak (2011) titled, “Student Teaching Assessment instruments: Possibilities and Pitfalls for Promoting Professional Development,” the research was able to establish that an assessment instrument that “portrays teaching as a complex, cognitive practice enabled the lecturers to consolidate and
reinforce their formative assessment in a more nuanced way than was possible when using an assessment instrument with a simple checklist design” (Rusnyak, 2011, p. 1).

A study titled, “Evaluating Views of Teacher Trainees on Teacher Training Process in Turkey” was conducted by Kildan, Ilbert, Pektas, Aydinozu, Incikabi and Recepoglu (2013). The purpose of the study was to evaluate the views of the teacher trainees on the process of teacher training in Turkey. The group involved “58 newly appointed teacher trainees from different branches who began their teaching profession in Kastamonu in 2010” (Kildan et al., 2013, p. 65). An interview that was developed by researchers was used for data collection and it had thirteen open-ended items. The data collected from the participants were analysed through Nvivo 9 software package and the themes were formed and encoded via this software (Kildan et al., 2013, p.65). The use of open ended questionnaire was also important in the current study. In their study, Kildan et al., (2013) student teachers indicated that they felt insufficient especially in terms of the school experience courses which to them did not adequately contribute to their profession. When the teacher student teachers were asked, “What do you think is the most important problem of teacher training process in Turkey?” their responses were that there was insufficiency of practice and application, which in turn limited the effectiveness of TP as trainees tended not to benefit much from it (Kildan et al., 2013, p. 64). The participants also were of the mind that they were under supervised due to insufficiency of Academic staff and problems caused by the accession system to the faculties of Education (Kildan, et al., 2013, p. 64). In Kildan et al’s study some comments made by respondents were presented verbatim by the authors. The researcher also used this strategy to add to the level of trustworthiness of the findings.
In a study titled, “Problems of Teacher Education in India”, by Desai (2012) some findings indicated that student teachers faced some challenges which were directly or indirectly engendered by their teacher education institution. The funniest thing is that the teacher education centres and the curriculum offered in teacher education have very little focus on new trends in education, (Desai, 2012). New developments and the need to incorporate new technology and the need to take heed of inclusiveness were some aspects trainees felt were not covered in their curriculum, which were relevant to modern trends in society (Desai, 2013). Another problem that was cited by the student teachers was lack of emphasis of subject knowledge. The B.Ed programme does not emphasise the knowledge of the basic subject and the whole teaching practice remained indifferent with regard to the subject knowledge of student teacher (Desai, 2013). Students also faced some problems with the supervision of their educators from university or colleges. Supervision before classroom teaching was viewed as ineffective as “lesson plans are checked superficially and no discussion is made by the subject method specialists” (Desai, 2013, p. 56).

In a study (the details of the study have been supplied under research question 1) carried out by Oppong (2013) on the perspectives of History student teachers concerning their supervisors’ remarks in TP it was established that students faced some challenges in their TP supervision from their university lecturers. The study revealed that most remarks from supervisors were inconsistent and inadequate. Remarks were different from what students were taught in their methods of teaching class (Oppong, 2013, p. 159). A study by Kourieeos (2012) titled, “The Impact of Mentoring on Primary Language Teacher Development during the Practicum” established that students showed dissatisfaction with their supervisors’ limited knowledge of the subject matter they were supposed to give
feedback on. Student teachers were also dissatisfied with lack of constructive feedback from their supervisors. The study established that there was lack of content and content specific pedagogy on the part of supervisors. The situation that obtained turned Teaching Practice into a stressful, disempowering and unproductive experience for student teachers (Kourieos, 2012).

The findings in the studies conducted by Kourieos (2012) and Oppong (2013) both relate to the current study which also sought in part to determine challenges related to student teachers’ supervision during TP.

“Student Teacher Voices: Teaching Practice Experiences of the Year One Early Childhood Student Teachers in a Field Based Teacher Programme”, is a study that was conducted by Murphy (2009). The aim of the study was to generate TP narratives from stage one E.C.D student teacher based on their experiences in a field based teacher education programme. Principles involved in using focus group interviews such as establishing ground rules to ensure the students knew what to expect were considered. Ethical considerations were made such as confidentiality and the right to decline to answer any questions (Murphy, 2009). As regards the assessments of the visiting lecturers, “nerve wracking experiences were storied within the focus groups” (Murphy, 2009, p. 3). A study by Chikunda (2008) made similar and related findings. In a study titled, “An Analysis of Challenges and Learning Opportunities Surroundings College – Based TP Supervision: The Case of Mutare Teachers’ College”. The purpose of the research was to unearth challenges and learning opportunities associated with college based TP supervision at Mutare Teacher’s college in Zimbabwe. The research method was a case study which was conducted in 2004 with 356 final year student teachers who had just completed their TP. This group was
regarded as appropriate since the students still had TP experiences fresh in their minds (Chikunda, 2008, p. 261). Fifty students took part in the study after being systematically random sampled (Chikunda, 2008). The instruments that were used in this study were characteristics of those that were used in the current study which are a questionnaire with open items which gave respondents room to explain their experiences and possible suggestions and an open interview guide which was designed to get clarification on certain responses given in a questionnaire. Students opined that they faced some trainer related challenges. For instance, 52% of the student teachers viewed the purpose of visits by college lecturers as fault finding and just giving a mark and 80% of the students described the nature of lecturer visits as frightening and 44% considered interaction between the lecturers and student teachers as being lecturer–centred (Chikunda, 2008, p. 263). “Phrases like witch hunting, and ambush were used to describe lecturers’ visits” (Chikunda, 2008, p. 263). Seventy one percent of the students pointed out that post lesson observation discussions did not promote dialogue. So the way lecturers conducted themselves killed reflective thinking on student teachers’ part. The studies by Chikunda and Kasanda are related to the present study as the analysis of challenges faced by student teachers doing Practicum was also the focus of the current study. However, Chikunda’s study just examined student challenges only in relation to college based TP supervision while the present study examined problems faced by student teachers in relation to multiple variables which included college and school based supervision, inter alia. Thus the present study covered a much wider spectrum than Chikunda’s.

Kecik and Aydin (2011) carried out a study titled, “Achieving the Impossible: Teaching Practice Component of a Pre-Service Distance English language Teacher Training in
Turkey”. Two hundred student teachers and 70 cooperating teachers in 48 state schools took part in the study in its first year (Kecik & Aydin 2011, p.76). The study describes steps that were taken and activities that were done to develop a model for the TP component of the pre-service English Language Training Program at Anadolu University, Eskisenir, Turkey over a period of six years (Kecik & Aydin 2011, p. 77). The activities in the study included Micro and Macro-Teaching, Monitoring, development of teaching plans, keeping of portfolios and supervision. The study was an action research. At the end of each year a general evaluative feedback on the whole process of TP was gathered through surveys (Kecik & Aydin 2011, p. 77). While the study by Kecik and Aydin was action research the current study surveyed student opinions concerning their experiences of TP through focus group interviews and open ended questionnaire. The action research design was a suitable strategy in Kecik and Aydin’s study as it was concerned with solving problems here and now. The study by Kecik and Aydin established that one of the educator linked problems student teachers faced was in determining learning outcomes. Some of the learning outcomes were vague for instance, “at the end of the lesson students will be able to learn vocabulary” and some lesson objectives were not related to language learning process for example ‘students will be able to fill in blanks,’ (Kecik & Aydin, 2011, p. 77). Such findings showed some weaknesses on the trainers whose task to adequately prepare student teachers was at stake. Stating SMART lesson objectives is one skill educators should make sure student teachers master before they go for their practicum.

Peters (2012) carried out a study titled, “Are they Ready? Final year Pre-Service Teachers Learning about Managing Student Behaviour.” One hundred and sixty-six student teachers were the potential participants but only 92 returned the written survey. The purpose of the
study was to determine “final year pre-service teachers’ perceptions in managing student behaviour” (Peters, 2012, p.12). Data were collected by means of a written survey administered shortly after the end of the student Practicum experience. An anonymous questionnaire was distributed at the on–campus debriefing session held shortly after the end of the final professional experience (Peters, 2012). To provide a “best practice frame of reference when designing the survey, the research drew on seven core behaviour management principles that were recommended by The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)” (Peters, 2012, p.21). The seven recommended principles were summarised as:

- “the creation of a safe, supportive and caring environment
- inclusiveness
- a learner–centred philosophy
- a quality learning experience
- positive classroom relationships
- school–based and external support structures
- an eco–system approach to discipline that considers the complex interplay between environmental, interpersonal and intra–personal factors” (Peters, 2012, p.22 citing De Jong 2005).

The questionnaire that was used in Peter’s study did not ask participants for their name, gender or age as it was not intended to provide insights about the impact of these variables on the pre-service teachers’ perceptions of confidence (Peters, 2012, p. 22). The questionnaire had a combination of Likert-type scale statements and open ended questions. Peters’ study was influenced by the view given by Neumann (1997) that “when mixed
method approaches to research are used, quantitative data can supplement or complement qualitative data, providing a form of triangulation” (Peters, 2012, p. 22). In the study by Peter’s, illustrative quotes from responses to open-ended questions were included in the write up. This is an apt strategy in qualitative study, since the use of exact words given by responses adds to the trustworthiness of the findings. Similarly, in the current study some words, said or written by participants, were included in the write up of the study, verbatim. The findings in Peter’s study were that student teachers’ reporting of strategies in managing student behaviour indicated a narrow ‘behaviourist’ conception of management. The students were facing challenges such as responding to the diversity of student backgrounds and behaviours, engaging all learners and working with a range of stakeholders. These findings were of interest to the present study which was conducted at a time when issues such as diversity are regarded contemporary.

“Teaching Practice Generated Stressors and Copying Mechanisms among student teachers in Zimbabwe”, is the title of a related study which was conducted by Mapfumo, Chitsiko and Chireshe (2012). The purpose of the study was to establish stressors and copying mechanisms for student teachers on T.P from a Christian related University in Zimbabwe (Mapfumo, Chitsiko & Chireshe, 2012, pp. 157-8). The research design was a mixed methods design to enable triangulation. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches was employed in dealing with large numbers and providing descriptions of how people experienced the world on a given research issue (Mapfumo, Chitsiko & Chireshe, 2012). Seventy–seven students were conveniently sampled for participation; a questionnaire and an unstructured interview schedule were used to compliment each other in data collection (Mapfumo, Chitsiko & Chireshe, 2012). In this study appropriate legal
and ethical considerations were made. Permission in writing was obtained from authorities at the institutions and students volunteered to take part. Participants were promised anonymity and confidentiality. Such legal and ethical considerations are critical in research work and so the present study took them on board. The questionnaire was administered personally by researchers. This strategy allows high return of completed questionnaires and adds to the level that ethical considerations can be made. Data analysis was done at two levels namely, quantitative and qualitative levels (Mapfumo, Chitsiko & Chireshe, 2012). The quantitative level involved labeling and categorisation of data, while the qualitative level involved “scrutinising and transcribing interview responses into statements that belonged together around the major themes of the investigation” (Mapfumo et al., 2012, p. 159). Some statements were recorded verbatim in the feedback on the study. The use of method triangulation in the collection and analysis of data helps to add to the credibility and dependability of the study. The main sources of stress for student teachers which had a bearing on the teacher education institutions was found to be work load as students had to write full lesson plans daily, they had to write assignments via distance education and had to teach and to do other responsibilities expected of any teacher (Mapfumo et al., 2012, p.161). The finding that TP was stressful was consistent with findings of other researchers in the area of stress among student teachers Mapfumo et al., (2012) citing Capel (1997) and Ngidi and Sibaya (2003).
2.4.3 Research question 3

What host school challenges do student teachers face and how do the challenges affect the operations of the student teachers?

The issue of conflicting expectations of student teachers, associate and college visiting lecturers has been found to be one of the challenges students face while doing their Practicum. In a study conducted by McGee (1996) which has already been referred to in earlier sections, it was found out that conformity to visiting lecturer expectations conflicted with expectations of school mentors and this caused enormous stress for some students. For instance, in the study it was reported that visiting lecturers expected full lesson plans and evaluations but the associate Teacher disagreed with the need for such thorough records or had expectation of a different planning format to the one required by the school of education (McGee, 1996, p.38).

In the some studies it has been established that student teachers face challenges in dealing with lack of discipline among students. Goh and Mathews (2011) carried out a study titled; “Listening to the Concerns of Student Teachers in Malaysia during Teaching Practice”. The research participants were 18 beginning teachers in Malaysia. The study established that student teachers were of the view that lack of discipline among learners and the learner behavioural problems posed challenges to STs and these caused student teachers to worry about the need for effective classroom management and student discipline (Goh & Mathews, 2011, p. 99). In a study titled, “Teaching Practice at the University of Namibia; Views from Student Teachers,” conducted by Kasanda (1995), student teachers expressed the opinion that lack of teaching materials (equipment, syllabi),
poor school facility, unhelpful host school teachers, pupil rudeness and indiscipline contributed to unsuccessful TP experience. According to the findings of the study by Mapfumo et al., (2012), some of the main sources of stress for student teachers in TP were learner discipline issues and workload. These findings made in the studies by Goh and Mathews (2011) and Mapfumo et al., (2012), were linked to the current study which also was carried out to determine the forms of learner and workload related challenges which student teachers faced as they were doing TP.

Mentoring related challenges have been found to be some common challenges student teachers face while they are doing their Practicum. Researches by Salleh (2013), Murphy (2009), Chikunda (2008) and Atputhasamy (2005) have established that in a number of ways student teachers face challenges linked to their mentors and the ways in which mentoring is rendered to them. Atputhasamy (2005, pp. 7 & 8) found out that the level of help provided by cooperating Teachers was below the level of student teacher expectations in the following areas;

- teaching the curriculum subjects
- classroom management
- information to function well in the school environment and help in evaluating and providing feedback on their teaching

The student teachers suffered because of the lack of commitment of their mentors. In a study titled, “Re-orienting Home Area Teaching Education Practice in a Two-Year Initial Teacher Education Programme: The Case of Mutare Teachers College,” Chikunda (2008) found out that 73% of the fifty students who took part in the investigation, reported that
they were given a plan to follow each time they taught and the students felt that this action by their school–based mentors stifled their creativity and individuality. The students expressed further concern on the way post lesson discussions were conducted by the mentors. Most students were of the opinion that post lesson discussions were non dialogical with the mentors pointing out areas of weaknesses with very little or no contribution from the mentee. This problem, “leads to living in the professional standards of others” (Chikunda, 2008, p. 237). In the same study, it was found out that only 32% out of the fifty student teachers received meaningful assistance on drawing up of scheme of work and on lesson planning, otherwise the rest of the student teachers were given old schemes to copy from and only 12% were assisted on how to mark. Such actions by mentors were a source of stress to the students who had gone on TP hoping that they would get quality assistance from their mentors, as they felt there was rather little help to assist them develop professionally from school based mentors. A study by Salleh and Tan (2003) also confirms some findings made in the study by Chikunda. The study established some weaknesses in the Shanghai Teachers Mentoring Model. “Mentoring is done within a performance culture that emphasises examination scores and an instrumental view of education,” (Salleh & Tan 2013, p. 160). The other weakness of teacher mentoring in Shanghai is the limited extent to which novice teachers can disagree with the experienced teachers and experiment with new ideas. According to Salleh and Tan (2013, p. 159) the effect of such mentoring is that student teachers are socialised into a culture of submission to authority and collectivism.

Murphy and Butcher (2009) in a study titled, “Student Teacher Voices: Teaching Practice Experiences of Year One Early Childhood Student Teachers in a Field based Teacher
education programme”, conducted in New Zealand, sought to find out how effective mentoring teachers were in enabling student teachers to strengthen their TP. Some student teachers were of the view that the level of support and the relationship with the attachment teacher was disappointing. 73% of the participants described their attachment as not being inspirational and 55% expressed some difficulties with the relationship with their attachment teachers due to the “mentors’ lack of availability or restricted access to Attachment Teacher” (Murphy, 2009, p. 3). Thus, there was a perceived distance in the mentor-mentee relationship and there were communication difficulties with the mentors. The students were of the view that such relationships caused loss of confidence of student teacher – “putting them off an age group” (Murphy, 2009, p. 3). Similar to findings made by Chikunda (2008) students in the study by Murphy (2009), perceived mentors as not contributing to student learning since they merely signed off documentation rather than actively engaging in mentoring. These studies by Murphy (2009) and Chikunda (2006) are related to the present study which also investigates student teacher challenges that are host–school linked. For much of their TP time, student teachers are under the care of mentors, so it was contemplated that students in this study could raise challenges they could be facing in relation to their mentoring.

Shaw, Pedersen, Cooley and Callinghum (2013) carried out a study titled, “Intentions and Behaviours: Record–Keeping Practices of Pre-Service Teachers during Professional Experience”. The study investigated how pre-service teachers used ICT to collect, record interpret and use classroom data on their students during professional experience (Shaw et al., 2013, p.73). Participants were “34-pre-service teachers in their final year of a Bachelor of Human Movement, which is a teacher education degree at the regional campus of the
University of Tasmania” (Shaw, et al., 2013, p. 74). Participants were selected because they were about to commence their final four week professional experience placement and they had already demonstrated competency in the three previous school placements where their role and responsibilities were gradually increased (Shaw, et al., 2013). A university research ethics committee granted ethical approval for the study. “Informed consent was provided before any data collection took place. The names of participants were replaced with pseudonyms” (Shaw, et al., 2013, p. 74). These legal and ethical considerations made by Shaw et al., are in line with modern demands in any research work and in the present study similar legal considerations and ethics were made. The study by Shaw et al., (2013) established that every participant commented at least once that they experienced some kind of difficulty related to access. They reported events where they (student teachers) were frustrated by a technical or physical issue which prevented, hampered or limited their use of Electronic Methods of Record-Keeping (EMRK) (Shaw et al., 2013, p 79). Issues of portability and technicalities were reported by student teachers as forms of constraints (Shaw et al., 2013). Some of the technical challenges which students raised were; using the laptop with another student, having no laptop, and not being connected to the wireless system (Shaw et al., 2013, p. 80). It was also found out that some students took some reasonable initial time to work on how to use EMRK. People’s use and skills involving technology are not uniform. Some students had their records lost or corrupted and viewed record keeping as time consuming even if it was done electronically and it was difficult to keep records of their learners using EMRK before a relationship with the learners had been established (Shaw et al., 2013). In trying to examine pre-service teachers’ behaviour in keeping classroom data on their students while doing Practicum, the study found out that
while the pre-service teachers exhibited a positive attitude towards the behaviour of recording, many of them had trouble performing this fundamental skill (Shaw et al., 2013). This difficulty was attributed to school related variables such as the nature of relationships with learners and inadequate availability of laptops for use by student teachers. The present study was conducted at a time when teacher education and schools had incorporated ICT in their work and so student teacher challenges in relation to the use of ICT while they were on TP were investigated in the current study.

2.4.4 Research Question 4

In which areas are student teachers better prepared and less prepared for TP?

In a study titled, “An assessment of the efficiency of the tripartite student teacher mentoring scheme in Zimbabwe’s Masvingo Region” by Chakauya (2008), among other things the findings of the study showed that the students and mentors who were involved in the study expressed the view that student teachers were adequately prepared for Teaching Practice in the areas of scheming, planning, preparation of media and their use. Nonetheless the same study found out that college preparation was not adequate on class control or classroom management strategies (Chakauya, 2008). Studies by Goh and Mathews (2011) and Kirbulut (2012) also confirmed that student teachers seemed to have been less prepared in classroom management and in dealing with lack of discipline among students and student behavioural problems. Student teachers pointed out that they felt less prepared in appropriate use of teaching methodology strategies (e.g. conducting experiments) and making quick adjustments to their new role as teacher (Goh & Mathews, 2011, p. 98). Some studies have established that student teachers were not adequately
prepared for T.P. as regards the understanding of the subject matter of the subjects they taught during their Practicum. According to Kirbulut (2012), student teachers displayed insufficient conceptual knowledge since at the teacher education institution concepts were taught by rote learning. Students also expressed their concern over their little understanding of the subject matter while on TP (Goh, 2011). In a study titled, “Problems of Teacher Education in India”, Desai (2012) established that one of the problems was lack of emphasis of subject knowledge. “The BED programme does not emphasise the knowledge of the basic subject. The whole teaching practice remains indifferent with regards to the subject knowledge of the student teacher” (Desai 2012, p. 53). In a study titled, “Are they Ready? Final Year Pre-Service Teachers Learning about Managing Student Behaviour,” the findings suggested that student teachers were ill prepared in dealing with responding to the diversity of student backgrounds, working with a range of stakeholders other than mentor teachers and engaging all learners, (Peters 2012, p.33). In a study titled, “Achieving the Impossible? Teaching Practice Components of a Pre-Service Distance English Language Teacher Training in Turkey”, it was found out that at initial stages student teachers had problems in determining learning outcomes, some lesson objectives were vague and others were not related to English language learning processes and so students were ill prepared in this aspect of lesson planning (Kecik, 2011, p. 77). Most of the cited studies were carried outside Zimbabwe, but they provided some findings which related clearly to the purpose of the present study.

2.5 Summary and gaps identified

In this chapter focus has been on theoretical and conceptual frameworks whose lens were used in analysing and interpreting the findings of the study. It has been argued that the
systems theory would be applied to address the interpretation of meaning. The conceptual framework covered the concept of teacher education and the essence of Teaching Practice or Practicum, inter alia. The various aspects covered under the conceptual framework provided some lens through which the researcher can visualise the direction of the research. Several studies related to the present study have been reviewed in line with the research questions that guide the study. In many ways the studies focused on areas that are critical to the present research such as findings on student teacher experiences (both positive and negative) while they are doing their practicum and establishing teacher educator and host school challenges that the students faced while doing TP. In many respects, some of the studies employed methods and made legal ethical considerations that are critical to the current study. Nonetheless, most of the studies were conducted in various parts of the world while the current study was conducted in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. The current study was conducted at a time when new practices had been introduced in Teacher Education and when there were new technological trends and educational issues such as the concepts of inclusiveness and collaboration. So the review of related studies has been an eye opener on the whole process of research. In the next chapter, the research methodology was covered.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research methods adopted for this study are discussed and justified, based on the research paradigm and related practices in data generation. The research paradigm, the qualitative research, epistemological models, philosophical dimensions, research method, data generation instruments and procedures, selection of participants, data presentation, analysis and interpretation procedures, legal and ethical issues, trustworthiness and dependability are annotated as they applied to the study.

3.2 Research paradigm

In deciding the focus of this study and research methodology, this study was grounded in the qualitative research paradigm. A research paradigm is a “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Lincoln & Guba, 1990, p 17). According to Bryman (2001, p.446) a paradigm is a “cluster of beliefs and dictates for scientists in a particular discipline influencing what should be studied, how the research would be done and how results would be interpreted”. To the researcher, a paradigm is a whole framework of beliefs, values and methods that guide the researcher’s actions throughout the whole investigation process.

3.3 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions in that framework. Qualitative research endeavours
to understand the nature of a given setting and what it means for participants in that setting and what is going on for them (Chisaka, 2013; Remadevi, 2011; and Greener, 2008).

Qualitative research has several characteristics which are germane to this study. According to Babbie and Mouton (2002, p. 270), Merriam (1998), Chisaka (2013) and Creswel (2007) some of the features of qualitative research are:

- Research is conducted in the natural setting of social factors.
- The actor’s perspective (the insider or emic view) is emphasised.
- Research employs an inductive strategy. Inductive data analysis is conducted. “Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories and themes from the ‘bottom-up’ by organising the data into increasingly more abstract units of information that involves working back and forth between themes and the database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes,” (Creswell, 2007, p. 38-9).
- The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998; Chisaka, 2013; and Creswel, 2007).
- The product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive (Merriam, 1998).
- The research is an interpretive inquiry. The qualitative research is a ‘form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand.
- The qualitative research provides a holistic account. The researcher strives to develop a complex picture of the issue under study. “This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).
There are several elements pertaining to this study which made the adoption of the qualitative paradigm applicable. The researcher considered the qualitative paradigm relevant because she was interested in understanding the meaning student teachers, mentors and college lecturers had constructed about student teacher TP experiences and how they made sense of the challenges students faced while on TP. In this study the researcher herself was the primary instrument for data generation and analysis. She generated the data herself through focus group interviews; open-ended questionnaires and examining of TP related documents. The study was conducted mainly in schools where students were doing their TP. The researcher reported the findings of the study using thick descriptions. In this study, theory was built from obtained data. The nature of student experiences while they were doing TP was explored and explained basing on the findings that were obtained from research participants. The study was also in line with circumstances which according to Creswell (2007) are suited for qualitative research. Creswell (2007) says researchers conduct qualitative research because an issue needs to be explored in depth so that a good understanding of it can be obtained by communicating directly with the people. Qualitative research is also conducted to give individuals the opportunity to share their experiences and hear their voices (Chisaka, 2013). In line with these views, the qualitative paradigm was chosen to guide the study since the study sought to explore participants’ opinions about student teachers’ experiences and challenges whilst they were doing their practicum. The study was purposed to hear participants’ voices as regards student teacher experiences on TP. Obtaining details about the student TP experiences involved the researcher talking to the participants and going to their natural settings.
3.3.1 Epistemological models

Three qualitative research epistemological models were chosen to guide this study namely, post positivism, interpretivism and phenomenology. These three models posit that social reality is constructed by the individuals who participate in it and that reality is constructed differently by different people (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, Remadevi, 2011 and Patton, 2000). In line with this principle inherent in these chosen three models, the researcher involved three groups of participants namely, STs, their mentors and lecturers with a view to get views of different individual participants on student teacher experiences and challenges while STs were doing TP. In addition, individuals were given the opportunity to respond to questions as individuals in the interviews as well as through completion of questionnaire while they were operating in different types of schools which the researcher sampled for participation. However, involving the participants at their workplaces posed some challenges. Although discussions were held in some secluded places, noise by pupils was an issue. This problem was detected by the researcher when she was transcribing the first two discussions which were conducted in the pilot test. Therefore, in the subsequent interviews participants were urged to speak loudly and the recording device was placed very close to the speaker. Job routine was a problem especially on the part of mentors. Some mentors did not have adequate time to complete the questionnaire at the time the researcher reached a school. As a result the researcher had to leave the questionnaires and get them back at an appointed time. Differing opinions were considered normal by the researcher in the process of analysing responses by individual participants. Thus these three models were chosen because they all propose that there are multiple realities and that the realities can differ across individuals, time and place (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The goal
of the phenomenological perspective is to make big and deep the understanding of the range of experiences (Creswell, 2007). The goal of the study was to enlarge and deepen understanding of the range of immediate experiences of student teachers when they were doing Teaching Practice. In order to attain this goal, the researcher obtained data from student teachers, mentors, and lecturers through questionnaires and interviews. The researcher used fairly small samples. Only 45 students were interviewed, only 62 mentors, 20 lecturers and 140 student teachers filled in a questionnaire. According to Maylor and Blackmon (2005) in the phenomenological approach, small samples are employed.

3.3.2 Philosophical dimensions

Ontology and epistemology are the two philosophical dimensions that were chosen by the researcher to guide the study. Philosophical approaches influence the choice of the critical framework and methodology (Chisaka, 2013 and Remadevi, 2011).

Ontology refers to the view of how one perceives reality (www.sagepub.com/upm_data/34087_chapter1pdf). Ontology is a philosophical belief system about the nature of social reality and it focuses on what can be known and how it can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Ontology views reality as the product of social processes. The study examined the ways in which STs viewed their practicum experiences and the ways in which lecturers and mentors viewed student teacher practicum experiences. In order to obtain this information, the researcher administered questionnaires, conducted interviews and analysed TP related documents, among which were; student teacher TP portfolios and TP assessment and supervision reports.
knowledge that is derived to be acceptable and valid

Epistemology is a philosophical belief system about who can be a knower. It includes how the relationship between researcher and the research participants is understood (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). While ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to the reality (Krauss, 2005). In this study a disciplined inquiry examining the personal meanings of individual’s experiences and actions in the context of student teacher’s practicum was conducted. The aim of the study was to provide systematic evidence for obtaining insight into the participants’ views of the context of Teaching Practice.

3.4 Research method

In this study the case study research method was employed to guide the researcher on procedures for conducting the study.

The study is an exploratory-explanatory case study since the study sought to explore the “what” and “why” of student teacher experiences and challenges while doing their practicum. This is in line with Yin’s view (2003 as cited by Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545) that the use of “what”, “who”, “how” and “why” leads to an explanatory case study. The study endeavoured to obtain data on several variables that were considered by research participants as contributing to the essence of ST experiences and challenges while student teachers were doing TP. A triangulation of data collection methods was employed in conducting the proposed study. Case studies examine the interplay of many variables for the purpose of understanding a situation (Maxwell, 2005). Case–studies are multi-method. This case study of the students’ TP experiences in the Midlands province, involved several
participants that is, several student teachers, mentors and college lecturers and the researcher used three instruments to generate data.

The case study method is “essentially a research in depth rather than breadth,” (Verma & Mallick, 1999, p. 81). The researcher chose the case study because:

- It gives meaning to contemporary phenomenon to a researcher that is too complex for an experimental strategy.
- It gives explanations to the casual links in real life.
- It is able to describe the contemporary phenomenon in the real life context (Yin, 2003).

The case study method was chosen because there are several merits that case studies present some of which are the following:

- Case studies are drawn from people’s experiences and practices and also are seen to be strong in reality.
- Case studies can be used for further study as they provide a data source from which further analysis can be made.
- Since case studies build on actual practices and experiences they can be linked to action and their insight contributes to changing practice. (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001 pp. 72-73, citing Cohen & Manion, 1991).

3.5 Data generation instruments and procedures

This study employed instrument triangulation. Focus group discussion, open-ended questionnaire and document analysis were the three data generation instruments that were
used in this study. All the three instruments were designed by the researcher, with questions or aspects (as was the case with document analysis) being linked to the objectives of the study.

3.5.1 Focus group

The point conducting focus group discussions in this study was to explore the joint construction about the experiences of STs while they were on TP. Focus group discussions provided insight to the researcher into how participants thought about student teacher experiences while student teachers were doing TP. The discussions covered a range of opinions and ideas, inconsistencies and variations that existed among the different participants in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe as regards student teacher experiences and challenges, while doing TP.

The researcher developed a focus group guide which had questions linked to the objectives of the study. The researcher further spruced the interview guide after some modifications were suggested by the researcher’s supervisor and she then pilot tested the interview guide at two schools, one in Gweru urban and another in Chiwundura district. After the pilot test the guide was shortened by removing three questions after making the observation that the questions had repetitive aspects. For example the question which read, “How are you benefitting from your TP supervision by college lecturers?” was done away with since an earlier question which read, “How are you benefitting from your TP supervision?” also covered lecturer supervision. The researcher kept the questions open ended as open questions are appropriate where opinions are being sought.
In this study the researcher was guided by and applied the principles discussed in this section of the study.

The choice of the research participants was done with care. The “composition of the focus group should be homogeneous” (Greener, 2008, p. 92) Participants with different backgrounds and experience can restrict the openness of the discussion. In line with this guiding principle, the researcher involved student teachers who were doing TP only. Wherever possible the researcher made sure that both sexes were represented and that students specialising in the Early Childhood Development and General courses were represented in each of the interviews. Sex and the course one was studying were regarded by the researcher as some of the variables which could influence the nature of responses from the participants.

The researcher employed manageable groups of membership ranging between four and five. While group sizes may depend on practical factors like size of available rooms and time, generally the group members should range between four and ten (Hyden & Bulow 2003). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 288) a group that is “too small exerts a disproportionate effect, while when too large the group becomes unwieldy and hard to manage, it fragments.”

The researcher recorded seven focus group discussions verbatim, using a voice recorder, an application on the mobile phone handset. The researcher wrote notes as each focus group interview was being conducted. In three other focus groups participants refused to have the discussions recorded. Consequently, the researcher had to just rely on what she recorded in writing as the interviews went on. The researcher used venues acceptable and convenient
to the participants, places free from unwarranted intrusions. This was made possible through the help of school administrators. The researcher had the participants seating in a horse–shoe or semi circle arrangement to make sure each participant had provision to see all other participants.

The beginning of the focus group discussion should be smooth and snappy (Kruger & Casey, 2008). The researcher introduced herself and outlined the purpose of the study and outlined that the results would be used to extend knowledge in the field of teacher education. The researcher told the students who were gathered for the focus group discussion that they were to remain anonymous and their contributions were going to be treated confidentially. At this stage ground rules such as the need to have one meeting were set and participants were encouraged to talk freely and even express contradicting or opposite views.

The researcher made use of open–ended questions, think back questions, focus questions beginning from general to specific and asked final summary questions. Furthermore, researcher avoided dichotomous questions as such questions can be answered with a mere ‘yes’ or ‘no’, thus rendering them of little use.

In focus group discussions, it is important to deal with specific individuals such as dominant participant, the expert and reluctant participant appropriately (Remadevi, 2011 and Kruger, 2013). In this study the researcher did the following:

- avoiding eye contact and thanking the dominant speaker’s contribution and asking other participants to say their minds in dealing with the dominant participant.
- not allowing the expert to talk over and prevent others from speaking
- having more eye contact with reluctant participant and asking them to comment on what would have been said or summarise opinions by the group.

While in the field, when collecting data from focus groups, the researcher took heed of White’s (2002) and Kruger’s (2007) suggestion that during a focus group discussion it is important to constantly ask oneself the question “Do I really hear the meanings, that I think, I hear?” So the researcher invited clarifications on contributions whenever necessary. At the end of each focus group interview the researcher summarised the expressed opinions and got participants’ ‘nod’ on the summary.

The focus group discussion was chosen due to the several advantages that it offers. In this study, focus group discussion allowed the obtaining of a range of perceptions and opinions about student teacher experiences while they were doing TP. The focus group discussion produced a more diversified array of responses. The discussion permitted a joint construction about how student teachers, mentors and lecturers viewed student teacher experiences and challenges while student teachers were on Teaching Practice. By using focus group discussion the researcher was able to generate information from several people in one session. In this study, the least number of focus group participants was four. The researcher was able to generate data through focus group discussion fairly quickly and at a lower cost compared to interviewing participants individually. This way data generation done was reasonably economical. The use of the focus group discussions allowed the researcher to get opinions clarified by using probes. The use of focus group discussions was a means of validating findings obtained by other means. Data reflected in the participants’ own words was obtained and deeper levels of meaning were identified.
Nonetheless in using focus group discussion strict adherence to group norms tended to “silence the individual voice of dissent and the presence of other research participants could compromise the confidentiality of the research session’ (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 301). To minimise such limitations the participants were encouraged to freely express themselves without forcing themselves to go along with thoughts expressed by other participants. Before the beginning of each session, the researcher urged participants to treat all sharing of ideas as confidential. According to Greener (2008) and Kruger (2007) a focus group is not easy to run as there are several skills required on the part of the facilitator. To try to enhance the researcher’s ability to conduct focus group discussions, the researcher followed some guiding principles of the preparation and running of focus group discussions, some of which have been outlined above. In addition, the researcher conducted some piloting of focus group discussions, before the final administration to help herself build skills required in conducting focus group discussions. Before the commencement of each focus group discussion, the participants were requested to answer briefly, in writing, some open ended questions related to the research objectives. On average, this activity took five minutes. This helped in increasing the participation level. Such an action was meant to “minimise bias by the presence of dominant members and hesitancy to talk by more reserved members” (Greener, 2008, p. 93). In an effort to heighten the trustworthiness of the research findings the researcher triangulated data obtained from focus group with data collected using other data collection methods, namely open-ended questionnaires and document analysis.
3.5.2 Questionnaire

In this study, open-ended, self administered, written questionnaires were used to generate data from students, mentors and lecturers. This was the main way by which the researcher generated data. According to Greener (2008) and Creswell (2007) a questionnaire is an appropriate device for gathering research data in a case study.

When designing the questionnaires, the researcher observed some principles for general layout and questionnaire format. She included clear and concise instructions and assigned a title to each of the questionnaires. A questionnaire with a title is perceived as credible (Walonick, 1993). Each questionnaire had a cover letter which provided an opportunity to persuade the participants to respond to it. The cover letter covered the following items: rationale for conducting study, mentioning the incentive, encouraging responding to it and describing confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher made sure that all items that would be necessary to answer research questions were included. The questionnaire was pilot-tested and some experts such as the researcher’s supervisor provided guidance in the design of the questionnaire.

It was necessary to pilot test research instruments before they were used on a full scale to identify shortcomings that needed corrections. Some purposes the pilot application served in this study were to determine whether:

- the questions as they were worded achieved the desired responses.
- the questions were placed in the best order.
- questions were understood by respondents.
- some questions should be added or eliminated.
• instructions were crystal clear and to estimate the adequate necessary time to be taken to answer questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

When the researcher had constructed the open ended questionnaires some student teachers, mentors and college lecturers were involved in the pre-testing strategy, where they were asked to repeat their understanding of the items in their own words. This was meant to check on the readability of the items. A pilot test was run using ten student teachers and six mentors at three selected schools and three college lecturers, all who were part of the research population but not part of the sample, whose attributes were similar to those of the target population (Cohen et al, 2006). After the pilot application, necessary improvements were made in relation to the design of the instruments and their administration. Two of the college lecturers who took part in the pilot test expressed the opinion that the lecturers’ questionnaire was readable and that the questionnaire represented content on student teacher experiences and challenges adequately but it was rather too long which would make it tedious for participants to fill in. Consequently, the questionnaire was shortened by leaving two or three portions for answers to each of the open ended questions instead of four or five portions for responses. The lecturer questionnaire which was initially five pages was reduced to three and half pages. In the pilot test responses to the questionnaires by mentors and students were not off beat in any way which was an indication that the questions were clearly worded. The researcher got some further assistance from three lecturers at Zimbabwe Open University who spruced the three questionnaires. All the three lecturers were of the opinion that the questionnaires had items that would effectively measure the opinions of participants on student teacher experiences and challenges when doing TP, that they were comprehensive and that the instruments really looked like
questionnaires. Two of them suggested shortening of the mentors’ and students’ questionnaires which the researcher did just the way she did it with the lecturers’ questionnaire. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher made bookings to carry out the study at the selected schools. At the time bookings were made, the researcher presented a letter of introduction which she obtained from the Zimbabwe Open University and copies of written permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development. The researcher employed the service of an assistant researcher in the administration of the questionnaire at schools where she was unable to avail herself. However, in most cases the questionnaires were self administered to make sure that necessary research ethics were considered.

The questionnaire was employed in this study as it offered the following merits:

- Questionnaires are familiar to many people and generally they do not make people apprehensive (Walonick, 1993).

- Written questionnaires reduce interview bias because there is a uniform question presentation (Walonick, 1993 citing Johada et al., 1989). There were no verbal or visual clues that were given by the researcher to influence participants to answer in a particular way. So, there was the advantage of standardised responses, as the variability imposed by differences in interviewing techniques and interaction between subject and interviews was eliminated (Greener, 2008 and Walonick, 1993).
• Questionnaires are relatively economical. Financially, there was a marked reduction in costs and time. Large quantities of data were generated over a relatively short time.

• Questionnaires ensured anonymity which is a critical ethical consideration in research.

In addition, the open ended questionnaire allowed the informants to express what they ‘believed, knew, liked, disliked and thought about experiences of student teachers when doing TP and the challenges which students faced. The open ended questionnaire did not limit the possible answers and it gave the informants the freedom to express themselves about student teacher TP experiences.

Nonetheless, in this study the questionnaires presented the following pitfalls:

• There was inability by the researcher to obtain clarifications or details.

• Despite the researcher having kindly requested participants to write legibly on the questionnaire and to respond to all questions, there was reduction in readability levels as some participants lacked good writing skills (White, 2002).

• Responses were not easy to code since they were varied and quite numerous.

• Open ended questionnaire was viewed by some participants as cumbersome and consequently some few participants left a question or two unanswered.

• Some participants did not return questionnaires. This was the case where the researcher requested a helper to administer the questionnaire on her behalf. Three questionnaires were not returned by three mentors, two by student teachers and
three by lecturers. In some cases questionnaires were reportedly left home or misplaced somewhere.

These demerits of the questionnaire made it necessary for the researcher to complement it with focus group interviews and document analysis.

### 3.5.3 Document analysis

Document analysis is another data generation method that was employed in this study. According to Chisaka (2013) and Tshuma and Mafa (2013) document analysis is one of the data generation methods that can be used in a qualitative case study. In this study the sources of documentary analysis were primary. The researcher analysed unpublished data namely student TP portfolios, college Teaching Practice syllabi and internal and external reports by TP supervisors and assessors.

The researcher took on board principles and suggestions given by eTa, No.18 (2009) and Tshuma and Mafa (2013, p.136) on how to plan and conduct document reviews. These included:

- limiting oneself to documents that answer research questions. In this study it was considered necessary to analyse TP portfolios prepared by student teachers, college TP, syllabi and practicum assessors’ and supervisors’ reports. Portfolios and reports provided data on student teacher experiences and their challenges. Challenges and valuable experiences were examined against objectives of practicum syllabi.
- securing access in good time as certain documents may require permission of other people before they can be released for analysis. The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study in schools and colleges in good time.
• ensuring confidentiality. The researcher developed a system that ensured confidentiality of individuals, reports about student performances and challenges were made anonymous and anonymity was considered in reporting findings.

• creating a data collection form to summarise data learnt from each type of data analysis. In line with this principle, the researcher developed a data analysis form, a sample of which is in the appendices section.

The document analysis as a method of collecting data has several merits some of which were witnessed in this study. In this study, document analysis brought up some issues not noted by the questionnaire and focus group discussions. For instance reports by some external examiners pointed out cases in which student teachers taught wrong knowledge on some topics. In one instance a student teacher was quoted as teaching a topic on directions in Mathematics but was wrongly naming the four directions (North, South, East and West) on a diagram, thereby giving wrong information to the pupils. To the researcher, document analysis was relatively inexpensive; it was less expensive than interviews. The researcher was able to analyse TP syllabuses and TP assessment reports with minimum travelling as analysis of these documents was done at the teacher education institution. In analysing student teacher portfolios, one analysis guide was used to analyse several teaching practice portfolios. Document analysis which was done at the teacher education institution, unlike the questionnaire and focus group discussions, was inconspicuous as it did not draw much attention of people around. In addition, document analysis was handy as the researcher was able to extract excerpts, quotations or examples from the written record to support an observation or a relationship (Johnson & Reynolds, 2013).
However, there are some challenges which documents analysis presented. Not all information in documents was applicable to the objectives of a study. The researcher had to sift information relevant to the study. In this study at two schools the researcher was denied access to the student teacher documents. The heads at these two schools felt it was not proper for the researcher to venture into student teacher documents, which in their view were strictly college property.

3.6 Selection of participants

3.6.1 Population

The target population of the study refers to all student teachers on T.P. in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe at the time the study was conducted in the third school term of 2013 and the first school term of 2014. It also refers to TP. mentors of student teachers and lecturers responsible for student teachers’ preparation.

3.6.2 Multi-stage sampling

In this study the multi-stage sampling strategy was employed. Multi-stage sampling refers to sampling plans where the sampling out is carried out in stages using smaller and smaller units at each stage. The multi-stage strategy is handy if a researcher wants to study a small subset of a larger population in which many members of the subset are easily identified but the enumeration of all is nearly impossible (Babbie, 1990). This research employed the multi-stage sampling strategy since it covered student teachers, mentors and lecturers in the whole of the Midlands province of Zimbabwe. First the researcher sampled districts then different types of schools and then individual participants.
3.6.3 Purposive and convenience sampling

Purposive sampling was applied in choosing districts namely, Chirumanzu, Kwekwe, Gweru and Shurugwi districts. According to srmo,sagepub.com/view/the -sage – dictionary-ofsocialresearch–methods /n162 com, purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. Punch (2005) says purposive sampling means sampling in a deliberate way with some focus in mind To say one was engaged in purposive sampling signifies that the researcher saw sampling as “a series of strategic choices about with whom?, where? and how? to do their research” (Tongco, 2007, p.147). The reasons for employing purposive sampling in the choice of these districts was that teacher education colleges have a long history of deploying student teachers in these districts and many schools in these districts have a long history in hosting student teachers doing practicum. Purposive sampling was chosen for the purpose of selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. The researcher was of the mind that the student teachers doing practicum, lecturers and mentors at attachment schools in the chosen districts had rich information on student teacher experiences and challenges while students are doing TP. The researcher liaised with the Lecturer-in-charge of TP to get information regarding placements of student teachers. Using the information about where student teachers were doing their TP the researcher divided schools into government, mission, council and private and then chose some schools for participation by purposive sampling. This way the researcher made sure that
the sampling was relevant to the conceptual framework and research questions. The researcher chose the sampling plan feasible in terms of time, money and access to people.

Convenience sampling was used to choose mentors and student teachers at attachment schools and student teacher lecturers at the teacher education institution. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of the ease of their volunteering, accessibility and proximity to the researcher (dissertation.laerd.com/convenience-samplingphp). In this study the sample was based on participant accessibility, availability and willingness to take part in the study. At a time when the researcher felt that she had reached a point at which she was no longer getting any real new information from the participants, 62 mentors had filled in the mentors’ questionnaire, 25 lecturers had completed the lecturers’ questionnaire, 116 students had filled in student teacher questionnaire and ten focus group discussion in which 45 students took part had been conducted.

3.7 Data presentation, analysis and interpretation procedures

In trying to bring order, structure and meaning to the mass of generated data, the researcher was involved in several activities which are outlined below.

In this study, data analysis started by organising the data generated from open-ended questionnaires, responses by participants in focus group discussions and documentary evidence.

Qualitative analysis began while the researcher was in the field, particularly with reference to focus group discussions and document analysis. Regarding focus group discussions, the researcher started analysis of the discussions by listening for inconsistent comments and by
probing for understanding the researcher also offered a summary of participants’ confirmation. Soon after each focus group the researcher transcribed the audio data and analysed each transcript soon after its completion. The editing of each transcript was done and so was free listing (reading the transcript with objectives clear in the mind) after a series of focus group discussions, the researcher looked for emerging themes, constructed typologies, described findings and took down direct quotations (Kruger, 1998).

The researcher then went on to code focus group discussion data. In document analysis as well as employment of questionnaire, the researcher also searched for underlying themes in the materials analysed and the responses given by participants and these were identified through the process of coding. In analysing data, the researcher was guided and continued to be guided by the data analysis spiral suggested by Creswell (1997) as cited in Leedy and Ormrod (2001) in which the steps followed after gathering raw data include:

- organisation of data
- perusal to get an overall sense of data and this involved jotting down preliminary interpretations.
- classifications which involved grouping data into categories or themes to find meanings in data
- synthesis and offering propositions.

In doing all this, the researcher analysed focus group discussion data in relation to the research problem and research questions (Shumba, 2013). She continued do the same with questionnaire and document analysis data.
The constant comparative method was used in analysing data. This means that data fragments arising from single participant cases were inspected and compared with that from others. The interview, document analysis and focus group data were constantly compared for the purpose of arriving at varied interpretations. Thus commonalities and differences in data were discussed in Chapter Four.

The researcher also conducted enumerative content analysis to enable her to report frequency of occurrence of certain responses in the data that was collected through the open ended questionnaire. According to Shumba (2013, p.146), “many researchers often miss this opportunity when for instance they report ‘many’ ‘few’ or ‘several’ when dealing with open ended responses”. In this study it was important to give the counts and report them as part of enumerative content analysis.

In the process of interpreting data, the researcher strove to achieve the analytical objectives of the qualitative approach namely: to describe variation, individual experiences and opinions, group norms and to describe and explain relationships (Mhlanga & Shumba (2013) and Remadevi, 2011).

The researcher explained findings in terms of the questions the researcher wants to answer and this involved describing the participants, settings and discussing the findings.

In Chapter Four findings were presented according to the research sub-questions and this is in keeping with Remadevi (2011) and Mhlanga and Shumba (2013) who say that findings should be presented according to objectives or sub-topics. Direct quotations were used to illustrate strongly expressed thoughts on student teacher experiences whilst they were
doing TP. Overall consensus of the participants, feelings of the majority and minority as well as differences by characteristics of respondents were described by the researcher.

In conducting data analysis the researcher was guided by the Grounded Theory method. The researcher examined research data to generate or build theory. Theory building in this study referred to the intention to develop an account of student teacher experiences and challenges while they are doing practicum, identifying the major categories, their relationships and the context and process, thus providing a theory of phenomenon, (Morse & Richard, 2002). Therefore, in this study, “data collection, analysis and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another,” (Bryman, 2008 p. 541). In addition, the researcher was guided by the Reflectivity Theory as she was involved in some reflection in an attempt to make sense out of the research data by organising it, discussing it and interpreting it. In analysing data, the researcher did so through the lenses of the educational systems theory, the principles of which were discussed in Chapter Two. Basically, data analysis described how the affect relations seemed to have influenced the findings of the study.

3.8 Ethical and legal considerations

The participation of student teachers, mentors and lecturers took place with their informed consent. This was done with schools and individuals sampled for participation. They were advised that they were even free to walk out of the research any time if they wished to do so. Indeed some two students refused to take part in the study and the researcher did not force them to take part. Additionally, participants in three focus groups felt uneasy about their contributions being recorded verbatim but were not apprehensive about the interview
being recorded by way of capturing main points in writing by the researcher. So, the researcher had to go by the wish of the participants. Consequently, the researcher had to pay attention to contributions made by the participants and recorded given information as quickly as the researcher could. The researcher also assured participants of confidentiality. The researcher ensured that the identities of the participants were non-traceable. All participants, at whatever level, remained anonymous in the collection of data and in its presentation. As completed questionnaires were returned the researcher coded them in the order they were returned for the student teachers, the mentors and lecturers. The letters ‘S’, ‘M’ and ‘L’ were used to give identification to student teachers, mentors and lecturers respectively. As regards focus groups, the researcher did not use any coding and participants were identified according to the number assigned to the focus group in which they took part in the study. In these ways, all participants remained anonymous. The assurance of confidentiality enabled the research participants to disclose information about student teacher TP experiences to the researcher without fear. All these considerations were made in line with the view that the well being of research participants must be researchers’ top priority (Belmont Report, 1979).

Necessary ethical considerations were also made during the process of writing the report especially in Chapter Four. The researcher strove to report exact findings and not falsify data emerging from the study. “Honesty, integrity and transparency are ethical responsibilities of every researcher,” (Mhlanga & Shumba, 2013, p. 219). The researcher did not ‘cook’ findings, omit data or overlook data that would not conform to expectation. Cases of non-response in questionnaires and focus groups were reported.
Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development and the Secretary for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to carry out the study in Teacher Training colleges and schools in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe.

3.9 Trustworthiness and dependability

In trying to enhance the realness of the findings of this study, rigour was applied in the methodological procedures and their description to show that procedures were properly and effectively implemented.

In this study, data or participant, methodological and environmental triangulation was employed. Data or participant triangulation refers to the use of different sources of information in order to increase trustworthiness and dependability of a study (Thurmond, 2001). Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple qualitative methods to generate data. Environmental triangulation involves the use of different locations, settings and other key factors related to the environment in which the study took place such as time (Guion, Diehl & McDonald). According to Begley (1996) triangulation is a tool for ensuring the realness of findings of a study. Student teachers, mentors and lecturers were the participants in this study. Research data were generated through the administration of questionnaires, the conducting of focus group discussions and analyses of TP related documents. The study involved the participation of people from different types of schools namely, council, government and mission schools, in urban and rural settings. The goal of triangulation was to view inconsistencies as an opportunity to reveal deeper meaning in the data (Patton, 2002).
All the research instruments were subjected to expert review and pilot testing and necessary adaptations were made and reported. The researcher adopted necessary ethics in research reporting, such as integrity, honesty and transparency. Details of these were covered under subheading 3.8. Among other things, the data were presented honestly, without making omissions or additions and cases of non-response were reported in the data presentation. The results of the study were presented verbatim where necessary. In support of the use of participants’ actual words in response to some questions, Shumba (2013, p.148 citing Denzin, 2009) says, “In thick descriptions the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals are heard.”

In an effort to increase the truthfulness of findings, the characteristics of the research have been fully described in Chapter One and Chapter Three. The adopted paradigm is qualitative, the design is a case study and sampling procedures to be followed are those appropriate to or synonymous with qualitative research and so is the selection research instruments. It is hoped that the theoretical constructs and research procedures that were used and have been described enhanced the translatability and comparability of the findings of the study. All these efforts added to the trustworthiness of the research findings. “The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry, is to support the argument that the inquiry’s findings are worth paying attention to” (Lincolin & Guba, 1985, p. 29).

According to Lincolin and Guba (1985), in qualitative research, the concept dependability is used in preference to reliability. Most of the procedures already described on how the realness of the research findings was enhanced naturally contributed to the dependability of findings. The dependability of the findings of this study was heightened through the employment of overlapping methods of data collection, pilot testing of instruments and
provision of an in-depth methodological description to allow the study to be repeated. The researcher took heed of Shelton’s advice (2004) that research processes, design and its implementation, should be fully described and justified since these are critical in promoting the dependability and trustworthiness of research findings. After the researcher had done some preliminary analysis of the data the researcher had generated from the participants and had written the first rough draft of Chapter Four the researcher requested two students who had taken part in the study (one pursuing the general course and the other the ECD course) to read through the drafts and reflect on the obtained data and interpretations the researcher had given, while the students were on school holiday during the December 2014. Both of them expressed the opinion that the data were representative of general opinions of what delighted student teachers and the forms of challenges that confronted them when doing T.P. However, one of them was surprised at the minimal report by only one lecturer and one mentor that students who were physically challenged faced the challenge of being looked down by pupils. The researcher attributed this little reference to the physically challenged student teachers to the absence of any physically challenged student teacher in the sample and to the fact that in teacher training colleges the number of physically challenged student teachers was still small.

3.10 Summary

In Chapter Three, the research design and methodology selected for this study were clarified, including the process of data analysis. Sampling procedures, data gathering details were described in the context of qualitative research paradigm. Issues of dependability and trustworthiness in relation to the study were explained. In addition,
ethical and legal considerations made in this study were discussed. In the next chapter, research data were presented, analysed and discussed.
CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four the researcher presents, analyses, interprets and discusses the generated qualitative data. The purpose of the chapter is to report the generated data through the eyes of the research participants. In this chapter the researcher reports key findings under each theme using appropriate verbatim quotes to illustrate findings. The researcher analyses, discusses and interprets the generated data according to each research question. The study generated data from student teachers who were doing Teaching Practice in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe, mentors and lecturers. One hundred and sixteen students filled in an open-ended questionnaire while focus group discussions were held with forty-five students. Sixty-two mentors completed an open-ended questionnaire and twenty lecturers also completed an open-ended questionnaire. In addition, the researcher analysed Teaching Practice documents. The order of presentation of information in this chapter begins with the exposition of attributes of the research participants. This section is then followed by the presentation, analysis, discussion and interpretation of research findings that were made in the context of the research questions.
4.2 Attributes of participants

Table 4.1 Attributes of student teachers who filled in the questionnaire

(N=116)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>General Course</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Childhood Development (ECD)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor of Early Childhood Development (BECD)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of school where attached for TP</td>
<td>Government urban</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government rural</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private urban</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Practice Semester</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>37.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of the 116 student teachers who completed the open-ended questionnaire, 80 (69%) were females while thirty-six (31%) were males. 80 (69%) of the student teachers were pursuing the General Course in Primary teacher education, thirty five (30%) were studying the Early Childhood Development Course while one student teacher (0.9%) was working towards the Bachelor of Early Childhood Development degree. One out of the eighty students who were pursuing the General Course was doing the General Course at a Distance and Open University in Zimbabwe. The rest of the student teachers who completed the open ended questionnaire were studying at Primary Teacher Training colleges in Zimbabwe.

The fact that 80 female student teachers and only 35 males completed the questionnaire seems to support the general observation that teaching is a fairly female dominated profession. The General Course to ECD ratio depicts that teacher education institutions seem to be enrolling more General Course students than ECD students because on the ground more General Course teachers are needed than ECD. The ECD teacher education course was introduced in teacher education programmes in 2007. The majority of student teachers who participated in completing the questionnaire were in government urban schools. This could be attributed to the fact that government urban schools are accessible and they support teacher education institutions in the attachment of student teachers. In remote areas, fewer students are attached for Teaching Practice. The majority of the student teachers were in their third semester of Teaching Practice. However, in each of the five semesters, there was a fair representation of student teachers.
Table 4.2 Attributes of student teachers who participated in focus groups

(N=45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>No. of Females</th>
<th>No. of Males</th>
<th>ECD</th>
<th>General Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Forty-five student teachers took part in focus group discussions. Most of the focus group discussions were conducted in urban schools for the reason that the number of student teachers at a single urban school is usually far higher than the number of student teachers at a single school in the remote areas. Four females and one male participated in focus group 1 in Gweru South urban. In this focus group two of the participants were specialising in Early Childhood development (ECD) while three of the students were pursuing the General Course in teacher education. In focus group 2, five students took part among whom were three females and two males. In focus group 2, two students were specialising in ECD while the other three were studying the General course. Focus group discussions in focus group 2 were held at a school in Gweru West urban. Participants in focus group 3 were all females at a school in the central part of Gweru urban. In focus group 3, one ECD and three General Course students took part in the discussions. Four students made up focus group 4 and this focus group was conducted in Chirumanzu rural district. Focus group 4 comprised four females, among whom were three General and one ECD student. Participants in focus group 5 were at a school in the South–West part of Gweru urban. In this focus group two males and two females participated. Of the four participants, two were ECD students while the other two were doing the General Course. In focus group 6 two females and two males took part in the discussions and among them two were specialising in ECD while the other two were doing the General course. The school at which focus group 6 was held was situated in the Northern part of Gweru urban area. Discussions with four participants in focus group 7 were held in Shurugwi rural. In this focus group three females and one male took part in the discussions and two of the participants were specialising in ECD and the other two were doing General Course. Five students made up
focus group 8 and three were females while one was male. Members in this focus group were doing T.P. at a school in Gweru urban in one of the Western surburbs. Two of the participants were in the ECD programme while the other three were doing the General Course. Focus group discussions with five students in focus group 9 were held at an urban school in Shurugwi town. Three females and two males made up the focus group and among these there was one ECD and four General Course students. Five students took part in focus group 10 and the school at which they were doing TP. was in the East part of Gweru urban. Four females and one male student made up the membership of this group and among these there were four students doing the General Course and one specialising in ECD. Thus, thirty three females and twelve males participated in focus group discussions. Nineteen ECD and twenty-seven General Course student teachers partook in the focus group discussions.
Table 4.3 Attributes of lecturers

(N=20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualifications</td>
<td>Certificate in Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma in Education</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Qualifications</td>
<td>First degree</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masters degree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as College Lecturer</td>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of responsibility for lecturer in teacher education</td>
<td>General Course</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Twelve male and eight female lecturers took part in the study. Twelve male and eight female lecturers took part in the study. All the lecturers had professional qualifications either certificate or Diploma in Education. Eighteen of the lecturers held a Masters degree
each while the other two had a first degree each. Such high academic qualifications can be attributed to general desire by Zimbabweans to pursue higher educational qualifications. The participants had varying ranges of the duration spent as college lecturers. Six of the lecturers had spent 1-5 years, another six had spent 6-10 years and another six had spent between eleven and fifteen years and only two had spent between sixteen and twenty years as educators of teachers. Fifteen of the lecturers were responsible for educating teachers who were working towards the General Course and five of the lecturers were responsible for educating ECD teachers.
Table 4.4 Attributes of Mentors

(N=62)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Certificate in Education</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Diploma in Education</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience</td>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 20 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Experience</td>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-20 years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 20 years</td>
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<tr>
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<td>33.9</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
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</table>
Sixty mentors (excluding school heads) completed the questionnaire for mentors. Thirty seven out of the 62 mentors who participated in this study were females while 25 were males. These figures seem to support the view that teaching is a female dominated profession. Five of the mentors held a certificate in education while 57 were holders of the Diploma in Education. The teaching experience of the mentors ranged from six years to above twenty years. The mentors indicated good mentoring experience and the majority had mentored student teachers from between six and ten years. This mentor attribute was critical to this study as good mentoring experience was a basis upon which research findings could be further made dependable. Most of the mentors worked at government urban schools where most of the student teachers who participated in this study were attached.

4.3 Research results

In this section, the researcher presented, analysed, discussed and interpreted data. It is a characteristic of qualitative research that data presentation and analysis are done in rapport and so in this section the researcher gave an account of what the researcher found out in the study and the researcher employed numerals and percentages in analysing data.

4.3.1 Participants’ views on ways by which student teachers were prepared

Question 5 in the student teacher questionnaire, question 1 in the lecturers’ questionnaire and question 1 in the focus group guide explored participants’ views on how students were prepared for TP and participants’ answers are summarised in Fig.4.1.
Fig 4.1 Student teachers’ opinions on how they were prepared for Teaching Practice
Mentors were not asked to state ways the student teachers were prepared for T.P. The researcher sought first hand information from lecturers and student teachers. 110 out of 181 (61%) participants expressed the view that micro teaching was a strategy by which student teachers were prepared for TP. This opinion was expressed by 53 out of 116 (46%) of the students who filled out the questionnaire and indicated that micro-teaching was a strategy by which they were prepared for Teaching Practice. In support of this, one participant had the following statement to make:

\[ S30 \text{ We did home based micro-teaching and micro-teaching at local schools around the college.} \]

In all the ten focus groups in which 45 students participated, micro-teaching was stated as an approach by which STs were prepared by teacher education institutions for teaching practice. Twelve out of 20 (60%) lecturers who filled out the questionnaire for lecturers in response to question 1 also affirmed that micro-teaching was one approach by which student teachers were prepared for Teaching Practice. According to L1,

\[ \text{Micro-teaching is done in schools for a week or two before students go for Teaching Practice.} \]

The use of micro-teaching which was stated by the participants, is in agreement with Kilic (2010) and Singh (2004) who are of the view that micro-teaching is an important strategy in the preparation of student teachers. Micro teaching is effective in promoting understanding of critical behaviors in the classroom and adds to the self confidence of the ST. The researcher’s experience was that micro teaching was one of the ways by which the Professional Studies department under which the researcher worked prepared students for
TP. Nonetheless, the main constraint which the department faced was failure to give each student the chance to re-teach as we were dealing with large numbers. The experience of the researcher was that due to time constraints, the department was not able to fully cover basic teaching skills for the benefit of students.

Lectures were specified as another strategy by which student teachers were prepared for TP by 102 out of 181 (56%) of the participants. Forty-one out of 116 (35%) of the students who filled out the questionnaire and 41 students in eight focus groups, and 20 lecturers expressed the opinion that lectures were one way by which student teachers were prepared for practicum. In the responses made by student teachers, the researcher deduced that many aspects relating to teaching skills were covered in the lectures among which were syllabus interpretation, learning theories and class management. In relation to this, some sentiments were expressed by participants as follows:

S1 Taught ways of scheming, planning and teaching of different subjects.

S106 We were thoroughly drilled on how to handle different pupils.

S51 We were taught and we were forewarned about some likely problems and how to deal with them on TP.

S38 We were taught about record keeping.

S21 We learnt on the application of the theory of education in teaching and learning through three aspects namely Sociology, Philosophy and Psychology.

S37 We had lectures on subject content.
In lectures we learnt about teaching aids to use in essays and how to handle pupils and maintain discipline.

I was theoretically equipped for two terms.

Similar opinions were expressed by participants in Focus Group 5, some of whom had the following to say:

Many things were discussed during the lectures. The issues of mentor-mentee relations were discussed. Rules and regulations we are supposed to follow were discussed in lectures.

According to a participant in Focus Group 6

In Theory of Education (T.O.E) we tackled the psychological part, studying children, the Sociology and Philosophy.

The opinion that lectures were a means by which student teachers were prepared for practicum was expressed by all the 20 (100%) lecturers. The quotes below were made by some lecturers to buttress the use of lectures as a preparatory strategy for TP.

L4 Teaching student teachers how to interpret syllabi, planning, record keeping and a variety of methodology.

L6 Lectures on Baseline Teaching skills.

L15 PSB Lectures on content and methodology.

L16 Lectures in PSA and other subject areas.
L17 Lectures on Class Management Techniques.

L18 Lectures in subject methodologies and necessary subject content.

L6 sort of summarised student teacher and lecturer views on the role of lectures in preparing student teachers by saying:

*Students are prepared for TP through lectures on baseline Teaching skills.*

Basing on these views expressed by student teachers and lecturers on the use of lectures as a practicum preparatory strategy, it would seem that deliberate attempt is made by teacher training colleges to provide appropriate Teacher education curriculum for the purpose of equipping student teachers with necessary skills for managing learners and the learning process.

Peer teaching was another TP preparatory strategy which 77 out of 181 (43%) participants stated. Thirty-six out of 116 student teachers (42%) who filled in the questionnaire stated peer teaching as a way by which they were prepared for Teaching Practice. This was substantiated by statements such as:

*S30 I presented to other students.*

*S58 The college engaged us in peer teaching first and in micro-teaching at last.*

In six focus groups 29 participants also expressed the opinion that peer teaching was one mode of training that prepared them for TP. One participant in Focus group 7 had this to say:
We did peer teaching so as to learn how to handle teaching. There were five students under one tutor. You are given a topic and plan a lesson and teach.

Twelve out of 20 lecturers (60%) also stated peer teaching as a way by which the teacher education colleges prepared student teachers for TP. Peer teaching may be regarded as one of the key strategies through which student teachers are prepared for TP as it involves students quite actively. Of course its effectiveness depends on how it is done in a given teacher education situation.

Twenty-three out of 181 participants (13%) gave the view that sessional tests were one way by which students were prepared for practicum. Nine students (8%) among those who filled in the questionnaire opinioned that sessional tests were a way by which student teachers were prepared for TP. This view was also expressed by 23 participants in focus groups 4, 9 and 10. Some statements related to the use of sessional exams as a strategy by which student teachers were prepared, which were made by students are as follows:

*S 20 We wrote sessional exams for all the courses we had done. Passing was conditional for someone to go for Teaching Practice.*

*S 33 We wrote PSA examination on how to make charts, to state aims in schemes of work and objectives in lesson planning and answered questions on class management.*

While student teachers stated that sessional exams were a means by which student teachers had been prepared for TP none of the lecturers expressed this view. Probably lecturers regarded testing as an integral part of lectures.
Eight out of 181 (4%) participants among whom were five out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire stated they had been prepared for Teaching Practice by way of a one week orientation programme. However, this strategy was not stated in any one of the focus groups. Maybe the students who did not state this approach of preparing student teachers for practicum, considered the one week TP orientation as part of the routine lectures, so they did not make a distinction between the one week TP orientation with routine lectures. However, three out of 20 lecturers (15%) stated that a programme termed “TP preparation” was one way by which students were prepared for practicum. This opinion was captured in the following statements:

   L3 There is a programme set aside called TP prep that is done for one week before students go on TP.

   L19 There is one week of TP orientation.

Probably the three lecturers regarded the one week TP prep activities as being distinct from other day to day lectures. Although routine lectures by their nature prepare student teachers for Teaching Practice, the one week TP prep is quite clearly organised to address needs of students who were left with a few weeks to go for TP. So to these lecturers, there was distinction between the two strategies, although they are clearly related.

Out of the 181 participants 20 students (11%) gave the opinion that writing assignments was one way by which student teachers were prepared for practicum. This feeling was expressed by participants in focus groups 2, 8 and 9 and five students among those which completed the questionnaire. This view was substantiated by statements such as:

   We wrote assignments based on media.
We did practical assignments.

None of the lecturers expressed the view that assignment writing was one way by which students were prepared for practicum. In spite of this difference in opinion, practical matters demand that pre-TP assignments be a tool by which student teachers are prepared for practicum.

The use of Teaching Practice modules was regarded by 11 out of 181 (6%) participants namely three of the students who filled in the questionnaire and eight students in focus groups 6 and 7 as one way through which they were prepared for practicum. None of the lecturers also mentioned the use of TP modules as a way by which students were prepared for practicum. This little reference to TP modules could be due to the fact that modules which students use such as Distance Learning materials, when on Teaching Practice usually cover concepts and content that would not have been covered before students go for TP. However, some content related to Teaching Practice can still be contained in these modules. Therefore, depending on the time that students get the these modules, modules can be regarded as assisting in preparing students for TP or can be regarded as material that supports students when they are on practicum.

Use of tutorials as TP preparatory strategy was specified by four out of 181 participants. This opinion was given by two students among those who completed the questionnaire and two lecturers. The use of tutorials as a TP strategy was not mentioned in any one of the ten focus groups. Since only four participants gave the view that tutorials were a means by which students were prepared for practicum, this could imply that tutorials were rarely used at the education colleges at which participants were being educated as teachers or at
which lecturers who took part in the study worked. A possible factor behind minimal use of tutorials could be the issue of large groups of trainees which lecturers handle and consequently time constraints. However, it is possible that some few individual lecturers can organise some tutorials for students, probably those based on students’ perceived weaknesses. Nonetheless, in some colleges, tutorials are usually organised as a follow up to a mass lecture.

Sixteen out of 181 (9%) participants, namely two of those who answered questions in the questionnaire, one lecturer and thirteen participants in focus groups six, five and two were of the view that lecturer-prepared handouts were ways by which student teachers were prepared for Teaching Practice. This view was captured in the following statements:

\[ We \ were \ given \ handouts \ on \ what \ to \ do, \ such \ as \ code \ of \ dress \ required \ as \ by \ the \ Civil \ Service. \]

\[ We \ were \ given \ handouts \ to \ use \ regarding \ what \ we \ must \ do \ on \ TP \ and \ must \ not \ do. \]

\[ We \ were \ provided \ with \ resources \ such \ as \ handouts, \ syllabuses \ and \ samples \ of \ documents. \]

Handout preparation is usually the effort of some lecturers. Some may not find them necessary if a lecture has been delivered, but others may feel it necessary to prepare handouts for students, so they can always use them together with lecture notes. Maybe lecturers, who participated in this study, sparingly prepared handouts for students for Teaching Practice. since only one of them gave the view that lecturer prepared handouts were one of the ways by which student teachers were prepared for TP.
Out of 20 lecturers only one expressed the view that lecturers’ demonstrations were employed to prepare student teachers for practicum. It was only in focus group 9, that one participant mentioned demonstration of lessons as one strategy by which student teachers were prepared for Teaching Practice. This very little reference to the use of demonstration lessons as a preparatory TP strategy could be attributed to the possibility that demonstration lessons are hardly used by lecturers as a way of preparing STs for practicum. Little or non-use of demonstrations by lecturers in peer and micro-teaching sessions deprives student teachers of an opportunity to efficiently apply some key skills in teaching. Lecturer demonstrations are instrumental in driving home concepts about effective teaching. Non-use of demonstrations by lecturer could imply lack of lecturer commitment.

On that account, ways by which the students who were doing TP at the time of this study were prepared for the practice, were viewed as many and varied by student teachers and lecturers who participated in the study.

4.3.2 Participants’ views on the pre-TP education adequacy

Question 6 in the student teacher questionnaire and question 2 in the lecturers’ questionnaire and a related question on the focus group guide required participants to give their opinion on the efficiency of pre-Teaching Practice Education. Out of 181 participants 92 (51%) expressed the view that pre-practicum preparation was effective and gave justification of their opinion. Seventy-nine of the students who filled in the questionnaire, 15 lecturers and eight participants in focus groups gave the opinion that pre -TP
preparation was effective and they gave justification for their opinions which are exemplified below:

S1 *I was thoroughly drilled on how to handle learner differences.*

S8 *It gave me focus of what to expect.*

S108 *The theories that were learnt during the residential period were relevant to the real classroom situations such that they made teaching and learning enjoyable.*

S102 *We were given a highlight of what is expected in the teaching profession.*

S36 *Because the things they taught us at college are applicable here at schools for T.P.*

S100 *I did not face problems when I started my TP because of the preparation from college.*

These opinions were backed up by participants in focus groups 6 and 7 where the following statements were made:

*We were adequately prepared in every aspect even the relationship between me and mentor, administrator, I think every aspect was covered.*

*Nothing was met in the field which we did not do.*

According to 15 out of 20 lecturers (75%) TP preparation was clearly linked to student teacher practicum activities and in this regard it was effective. The following statements made by some participants support this view.
Students are exposed to necessary experience required before actual practice.

Students are guided before actual practice.

However, some participants in focus groups 3 and 7 had some mixed opinions on the adequacy of pre–TP education. The statements quoted below support this finding:

*The preparation for TP was adequate but some things like document preparation remained unclear.*

*TP preparation was adequate in most cases. It was well done since we got the picture of what teaching is all about though we cannot say it was 100% adequate.*

*TP preparation was ok though time was inadequate. The group was too big to prepare trainees adequately. We were taught about computers but we are still learning about their use and we are unable to use them in our teaching.*

This mixed opinion was expressed by one student who completed the questionnaire. In his opinion, TP student preparation was somewhat adequate. The participant articulated their viewpoint as follows:

*S124 Relevant ground was covered but everything was hurriedly done. I was not confident when I went for TP. Preparation of documents was hazy to most of us in ECD.*

Nevertheless, out of 181 participants 55 (30%) that is to say thirty-six students who completed the questionnaire, four lecturers and fifteen students in focus groups 2, 9 and 10 out rightly expressed the point of view that student TP preparation was inadequate. This
sentiment is supported in the quoted statements made by students who completed the questionnaire. These are given below:

S86 No. I did not get the chance to re-teach in micro and peer teaching sessions. Some concepts remained unclear. It was hurried.

S49 There were unclear areas especially on evaluation.

S64 I did not grasp documents. TP preparation was hurried.

S4 The pre–TP teaching education lacked a lot on the ground.

S38 No, not quite. Only a few of us practically taught in peer teaching. No videos, no replay. The problem was the hurry which was in it.

S46 It was carried out only a few weeks and we did not have enough time to practise scheming and planning before going for TP.

S28 Preparation of ECD documents remained unclear.

In focus groups 2, 9 and 10 TP preparation was clearly perceived by 15 students as inadequate by some participants and the statements given below bear testimony to this view.

We were not fully prepared. Records such as the anecdotal were not covered due to time constraints.

Not adequate, time was the problem and so TP preparation was too brief.

Two terms were too short for the work we had to cover.
Similar views were given by four lecturers (20%) in their response to question 2 of their questionnaire, on whether the strategies their colleges employed to prepare student teachers were adequate. The four lecturers observed that the practical part of preparing student teachers for practicum was inadequate. Some of the lecturers had the following sentiments:

L1 *Practically it is found wanting, unless there is ample time for it.*

L11 *More practice is needed but is inadequate due to 2.5.2 model.*

L18 *Theoretical preparation is very effective though flawed by time limit and student numbers. Students eventually go for TP without having necessary practice.*

Out of 20 lecturers, two felt that pre-practicum preparation for student teachers was theoretically adequate. Two other lecturers were of the opinion that TP preparation was hurriedly done. L10 had this to say:

*Not effective since it is done hurriedly and there is no follow up whilst on home area T.P.*

The coverage of theory related preparation was perceived as adequate by the majority of participants (51%). Such an opinion could be attributed to the coverage of content or curriculum which is clearly related to the development of essential skills of teaching. Nonetheless, the adequacy or effectiveness of the TP preparation is affected by time and the large number of students and consequently the participants regarded the TP preparation as practically inadequate as students did not get enough time to practise some of the skills of teaching, in tutorials, in peer and micro-teaching. Thus, it seems the positioning of
Teaching Practice could be linked to the view by some participants that TP preparation for student teachers was inefficient in some ways.

Findings on pre-Teaching Practice strategies employed in the preparation of student teachers who took part in this study support Remesh (2013) and Kilic (2010) who are of the view that micro and peer teaching are efficient techniques for learning effective teaching but there are certain conditions such as affording practice to all members and giving them a chance to reteach that should be met for it to be effective. From a practice perspective, the findings made on the essence of ways by which student teachers were prepared for TP and the ways in which they were viewed as effective and ineffective by participants provide strong support for continuing to inform and raise awareness about principles that should be adhered in employing certain strategies in preparing student teachers for practicum among teacher educators.

4.3.3 Aspects student teachers felt positive about TP

4.3.3.1 Student delights about actual teaching while doing TP

Questions 6, 7, 8, 9 10 and 11 of the student teachers’ questionnaire, question 7 of the lecturers’ questionnaire and question 4 of the mentors’ questionnaire requested participants to state what student teachers cherished about practicum. Varied responses were made and the responses made to the questions on this issue are presented in Fig 4.2 and then elaborated.
Sixty out of 243 (26%) participants expressed the view point that the opportunity afforded to student teachers to put theory into practice was one of the things student teachers

Fig 4.2 Student teacher delights in their actual teaching when doing TP
delighted in while they were doing TP. Twenty-four students among those who completed the questionnaire stated putting theory into practice or exposure as one of the things they cherished about their teaching while doing Teaching Practice. Some of the participants gave the following responses:

S90 *The application of theory of education within the classroom situation is directly corresponding to what we were taught prior to TP.*

S89 *I am now implementing theories such as Bruner’s and Chomsky’s and I am discovering that truly children need to learn by discovery and they need to be reinforced*

S74 *Learning to manage pupils of different abilities.*

Nine participants in focus groups 5, 7 and 10 also supported the view that student teachers cherished applying learnt theory to practice. Some students had the following to say:

*We are delighted in that we are practising the theory we learnt, right now.*

*We are getting much exposure; it gives us confidence in the career that we have chosen.*

Nine out of 20 lecturers (45%) stated the hands-on exposure as one thing that student teachers said they enjoyed while doing practicum. Some of the supporting statements are:

*L5 They get a chance to test the theories they would have learnt.*

*L1 They test the real wine- how it is like to handle 40-50 pupils.*
In support of the views given by some students and lecturers, out of 62 mentors, 17 (27%) in response to question 4 in the mentors’ questionnaire which explored mentors’ views on what aspects of TP delighted student teachers, said that they had made an observation that student teachers enjoyed the actual exposure they got while doing Teaching Practice. One mentor had this to say:

M61 *I think executing lessons is most exciting to them because they can link theory and practice. They can feel the real teaching taking place.*

The opinion that STs delighted in putting into practice the theory which they learnt prior TP relates clearly to one of the objectives of practicum in teacher education. According to Akbar (2002) as cited by Gujjar et., al (2010) one of the objectives of practicum in teacher education is to provide STs with an opportunity to put theories into practice The hands on practice provided during practicum assists student teachers to develop a deeper understanding of educational principles and their implications. The theory learnt in teacher education in Zimbabwe includes foundations in education (Sociology, Psychology, History and Philosophy) and Professional studies. Professional studies focuses on the science of teaching and learning as it is applied in didactic situations.

Gaining confidence was stated by 13 out of 243 (5%) participants only among those students who completed the questionnaire as an aspect which they delighted in during actual teaching. Maybe this aspect which students gave as one of the things they cherished when doing teaching practice could be attributed to the little or no confidence students may have before embarking on TP. Confidence is gained partly due to variables such as
continued practice and guidance by mentors, college supervisors and contact sessions organised by the colleges. One of the participants gave the following supporting statement:

\[ S40 \text{ My confidence has been built as I interact with pupils.} \]

While some students who completed the questionnaire brought up the view that they cherished gaining confidence in their practicum, in all the focus groups this aspect was not mentioned. Lecturers and mentors did not acknowledge this delight on the part of students. Probably the students who did not state this point did not have any lack of confidence from the moment they began TP. In some cases, confidence could be an inborn trait. Closely related to this, most likely, mentors who had student teachers who did not lack confidence from the time they started Teaching Practice could not have stated this aspect anyway.

Twenty-five out of the 243 (10%) participants gave the opinion that they cherished being supervised in their teaching while they were doing Teaching Practice. Among these 25 participants were 11 students out of the 116 who completed the questionnaire, five participants in focus group 8, five mentors and four lecturers. One participant had the following statement to give:

\[ S26 \text{ I delight being supervised by lecturers and mentors.} \]

In focus group 8 participants also gave the opinion that they cherished being supervised when doing T.P. The following statement is evident of this opinion:

\[ \text{We are learning from seasoned mentors.} \]
However, in other focus groups this form of delight was not mentioned. Four lecturers out of 20 (20%) also conceived the opinion that student teachers say they cherish being supervised while doing teaching practice. One lecturer had the following to say:

L6 *They cherish being supervised, being assessed and passing.*

Mentors did not categorically state that student teachers cherished being supervised. However, they expressed some sentiments about what student teachers cherished about the Teaching Practice which had a bearing on supervision. Five of the mentors out of 62 (8%) gave the opinion that student teachers cherished learning new things from their mentors.

Seven out of 243 (3%) participants all of whom were students among those who filled in the questionnaire expressed the feeling that, while they were doing Teaching Practice, they cherished interaction with pupils from diverse cultures in their teaching. One student had this to say:

S100 *I cherish getting to know pupils as individuals from different cultural backgrounds*

Nonetheless, this opinion was not expressed in any of the focus groups or by any of the lecturers or mentors. Generally, in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe the main cultural groups are Shonas and Ndebeles, so at some schools in this province, pupils of both Shona and Ndebele origin are usually enrolled. In addition, in some schools there might be white and coloured pupils so the seven students who gave the opinion that what they cherished about their teaching when doing practicum was interaction with pupils from diverse cultures, might have been influenced by such a scenario.
Good pupil behaviour in the didactic environment was viewed by 10 out of 243 (4%) participants namely four students amidst those who responded to the questionnaire, four participants in focus group 7 and two mentors, as one of the phenomena that student teachers appreciated about their teaching when they were doing Teaching Practice. One of the students had this to say:

*S73 The good rapport between me and the children, they display good behaviour.*

In focus group 7, this feeling was also expressed. One participant had the following to say:

*The children I am teaching are co-operative and they participate very well, so I am happy about that.*

In line with the opinion given by some students that they cherished pupils’ good behaviour, two mentors were of the view that student teachers cherished being respected by students in their teaching. One mentor made the following statement:

*M25 The student teachers cherish being respected by the pupils.*

While none of the lecturers expressed any opinion on good pupil behaviour as being a thing that student teachers cherished, good pupil behaviour is necessary in any teaching situation as it contributes to good class-teacher rapport and effective teaching and learning in general.

Provision of resources was stated by eight out of 243 (3%) as something student teachers cherished in their teaching when they were doing Teaching Practice. This view was expressed by three students in their response to question 7 which read, “What do you cherish about your actual teaching while you are on T.P.?”. In
addition, four participants in focus group 3 and one mentor also supported the thinking that student teachers delighted in being provided with teaching resources. In support of this feeling, one of the students made the following statement:

S103 I am supplied with stationery.

In focus group 3 only, participants expressed the feeling that the school at which they were doing their practicum delighted them by giving them stationery. One participant quipped:

The administration provides stationery.

None of the lecturers pointed out that student teachers gave reports that they were supplied with teaching resources when they were doing Teaching Practice. Only one mentor gave the opinion that students are gratified by the provision of teaching resources by the school and this particular participant made the following statement:

M24 Students are delighted about being given relevant stationery in time.

The very few responses on the provision of resources as a delight to STs could be an indication that in many schools student teachers were not provided with teaching resources. The form of resource which was mentioned by the participants was stationery only yet there are other forms of resources such as teacher resource books and textbooks whose provision is critical to effective teaching, more so, teaching by student teachers.

Only seven out of 243 (3%) participants were of the feeling that learning to be resourceful was one aspect that they cherished about their TP. This view was given by three of the students who completed the questionnaire and four students in focus group 4. One student had the following to say:
I always research before I teach.

In focus group 7, this opinion was also expressed as is evidenced by the quote below:

*I am getting more about the subjects. I am researching more and this is boosting my knowledge.*

No lecturers and mentors were of the view that student teachers delighted in learning to be resourceful while they were doing TP. Lack of responses in this aspect could imply that at the time the study was conducted, lecturers had not received any report from students that they were delighted in learning to be resourceful. The same can also be said about mentors, may be they had not witnessed any pleasure in students concerning their learning to be resourceful. In any case, in some instances some individuals enjoy getting resources on the platter and trying to be resourceful may not be regarded as being delightful.

Eleven out of 243 (5%) participants expressed the view that student teachers delighted in the ability by pupils to communicate in English. In their teaching while doing Teaching Practice, nine students who filled in the questionnaire expressed the view that the ability by pupils to communicate in English, was one of their delights. This opinion was expressed only by participants who were doing their practicum at some government and private schools in urban areas. One supporting statement of this opinion is:

*S44 Pupils speak and write good English. I don’t struggle to understand them and them to understand me.*
Two lecturers out of 20 also gave the opinion that students got delight from good use of the English language in teaching pupils. To buttress this opinion, one lecturer made the following statement:

L3 They (students) enjoy good use of English by pupils and it also makes their teaching easy.

This delight derived from good communication in English by pupils, which was expressed by a rather small portion of the participants, is critical as English is the language of instruction in Zimbabwean schools. Fluency in this language on the part of the teacher and pupils adds to the joys of teaching and learning. That many participants did not mention this form of delight may be attributed to possible communication problems by learners in their oral and written work.

Thus, student delights on their actual teaching during Teaching Practice hinged on the theory they learnt while at college, which they enjoyed putting into practice, school provision of resources, their supervision and pupil discipline and ability. That varied responses were given by participants on what student teachers felt was positive about their actual teaching while doing TP may be attributed to student teacher differences in perceptions and the different schools at which they were hosted.

The findings made in this study that student teachers felt positive about good pupil behaviour and provision of teaching and learning materials support findings made in Kasanda’ study (1995) which was conducted in Namibia. In Kasanda’s study, participants gave the view that provision of curriculum materials and cooperating pupils contributed to TP success. The fact that student teachers delighted in being supervised as they delivered
lessons confirms findings in a study carried out by Adie (2012) in Central Queensland Australia, in which the student teachers who took part in that study expressed that they felt positive about the valuable supervisory role played by supervisors, teachers and the University liaison academics. However, some of the findings of this study regarding aspects of actual teaching which student teachers felt positive about which include the ability by learners to communicate in English, and the opportunity to interact with learners from diverse cultures, had no bearing on the findings made in the studies reviewed in Chapter Two. Such findings were based on situations that obtained in the system of education in Zimbabwe at the time this study was carried out. In the Midlands province of Zimbabwe, there are several cultural groups of people and this pattern repeats itself in the school system. The language of communication is English and is L2 to most pupils. So the ability of pupils to communicate in English brings delight as it makes teaching easy, with pupils being able to express themselves.

4.3.3.2 Students’ delights in being mentored

Question 8 in the student teacher questionnaire, 7 in the lecturers’ questionnaire, question 4 in the mentors’ questionnaire and question 6 in the focus group interview guide all explored participants’ views on the forms of delights student teachers derived from their mentors. Participants gave several responses. Seventy-one out of 243 (29%) participants gave the opinion that student teachers delighted in being mentored by professionals. Forty students among those who completed the questionnaire responded that they cherished the ways in which the mentors were models of the right ways of approaching professional issues. The mentors were perceived as student teacher helpers in the development of planning skills and lesson execution skills, class management, in teaching student teachers
new methods of teaching, and in teaching them computer programmes. Related to all these aspects of delight some four student teachers stated they delighted in the coaching they received and demonstrations that were executed by their mentors. The delight that student teachers had in the mentors’ modeling of a scope of effective teaching behaviours is supported by statements made by the student teachers such as the following:

S39 *I am being exposed to new and flamboyant ways of making media.*

S24 *Superb demos by mentor in third term but experience with the mentors at ECD ‘A’ in the first two terms was not delightful at all, we did not learn from the mentor.*

S45 *I am learning a lot in computers from my computer mentor*

S30 *Mentor allows for some observation of new effective teaching methods.*

S12 *Mentor assists in conducting the lessons as well as pointing out and improving on my weaknesses.*

The view that student teachers cherished the professional assistance they received from mentors was also expressed by 18 student teachers in focus groups 2, 4, 5 and 9. The following statements bear testimony of aspects of mentoring student teachers cherished.

*Assist in selection of content, media and demos.*

*Help in lesson delivery by way of giving suggestions and executing demonstrations.*

*Mentors demonstrate lessons for us.*
Ten out of 62 mentors also stated that student teachers cherished good mentoring and related to student teacher opinion on the professional mentoring the student teacher cherished, mentors had the following statements to make:

M39 *Student teachers cherish excellent assistance from their mentors.*

M51 *Demos by mentor.*

In addition, three lecturers also buttressed the opinion that student teachers cherished effective mentoring. Some supporting statements are as follows:

L21 *Students enjoy working under an effective mentor.*

L11 *Benefits from efficient mentoring i.e. on the job training.*

The problem of some students of not receiving any help from mentor as expressed in the statement made by S24 could be attributed to the scenario obtaining at the time the study was conducted. For the purpose of exposing ECD student teachers to practices in ECD (A) (0-3 years) many ECD student teachers were attached at nursery schools. The majority of these nursery schools were being manned by para-professionals who by the country’s educational standards were less academically educated to handle ECD (A) children than college or University ECD students who were doing their practicum. So the para-professionals found themselves learning from the student teachers. M35’s view supports this point when they said:

*Having a well informed mentor delights student teachers.*
Ten student teachers out of the 243 participants (4%) expressed the feeling that they delighted in being given help in tackling distance education assignments by their mentors. Some students had the following statements to make:

S45 My mentor goes an extra mile, she helps in tackling distance education assignments.

S15 Mentors are keen to help us to do distance education assignments.

The teacher development curriculum, operative in teacher development institutions in Zimbabwe, requires student teachers to do some distance education assignments when doing practicum and so mentor assistance in this regard was appreciated by the participants. Nonetheless, this sentiment was not expressed in any of the focus groups. Since each of the focus group discussions was held at a specific school, it might be possible, that at the individual schools where the focus groups were held, the mentors there did not help student teachers in tackling distance education assignments.

Nine participants out of 243 (4%), all of whom were students among those who responded to the questionnaire gave the opinion that being counselled by their mentors was a form of delight to them. One student teacher made the following statement to buttress this opinion:

S15 My mentor is my counselor. She counsels me on issues outside my normal teaching duties.

Fourteen mentors out of the 243 participants buttressed opinions of students on what student teachers cherished about being mentored by expressing the view that student teachers delighted in getting co-operation from mentors. This view summarises student
opinions given on the aspects that they delighted about being mentored and the following statements given by some mentors are in support of this idea:

M11 *Students are delighted when the mentors work co-operatively with them.*

M22 ..........*if mentor is accommodative, helpful and friendly.*

These views given by student teachers on the aspects of mentoring they delighted in are in line with some of the roles of mentoring and characteristics of effective mentors suggested by Furlong and Maynard (1995) and Burden (1998) as cited by Ngara and Ngwarai (2012). Nonetheless, students stated some issues that they had with their mentor and these are going to be presented in a subsequent section.

Seventy-one out of 243 (32%) participants gave the opinion that student teachers delighted in being mentored by professionals. That mentors were efficient helpers in aspects such as planning for teaching, lesson delivery and demonstrations of teaching delighted the student teachers. These findings are in keeping with McDonald (2004) and Ulvick and Smith (2011) who are of the view that a good mentor should be a good teacher who is able to demonstrate good teaching practice and is a giver of consistent, clear and constructive feedback. Student teachers felt positive about the counseling role the mentors performed, mentor cooperation and good rapport between the mentors and mentees. These findings are consistent with Murphy (2009) whose study on the “Teaching Practice Experiences of year one Early Childhood Students in a Field Based Teacher Education Programme” which was carried out in Singapore, also established that 64% of the student teachers who took part in his study reported a positive practicum experience as mentors were regarded as supportive,
being committed as evidenced by their having regular meetings with student teachers and offering apt advice.

4.3.3.3 Student teacher delights in using modern technology

In response to question 8 which asked student teachers to state aspects of using technology that delighted them while they were doing Teaching Practice, 44 out of 116 (38%) students indicated the non-existence of computers, while eight (7%) acknowledged availability of computers at the schools where they were doing the practicum, but had no access to them. This could be possible in that some computers were just gathering dust in some schools.

The following statements support these opinions:

- S44 There is nothing very interesting as schools are yet to acquire equipment like whiteboard, projectors, which are now in line with modern teaching.
- S24 None, no computers, no video games for children.
- S14 Just a chalkboard. No modern machines.
- S62 Computers are not for use by student teachers.

Nonetheless 22 out of 116 (19%) student teachers expressed the view that they enjoyed using modern technology while they were doing practicum. Eight (7%) delighted in accessing the internet, two (2%) in using projectors and eight (7%) in using computers during lessons. Use of radios was stated as one way by which four students (4%) got delighted in using modern technology. Two (2%) participants expressed the view that they delighted in learning much about computers from computer mentors. All these delights were stated by student teachers in schools located in urban areas. This could be an
indication that urban schools are making efforts not to lag behind technological developments. This corroborates Kelly (2000) who says that curriculum should not fall behind technological development. The following statements support the forms of delights student teachers obtained from using modern technology:

S45 *I am learning a lot in computers from the computer mentor.*

S53 *I am getting access to the internet in the computer lab, thereby making it easy for writing assignments.*

S48 *There are a lot of computers which as students we have access to when doing assignments.*

S42 *I delight in using computers during lessons.*

Delights derived in using modern technology by student teachers were stated by just 22 student teachers who were attached at private and some government and council urban schools. In the focus groups no mention was made about delights being derived from the use of modern technology by students while doing practicum. Such a scenario may be attributed to the unavailability of modern technology in schools especially in rural areas, limited access by student teachers to modern technology which is available at some schools and very limited ability to use modern technology by student teachers. Some of these issues are going to be examined further under the section on challenges faced by student teachers while doing TP. There was no response to the question on what delighted students as regarded use of modern technology by eight students while the other 35 (30%) students stated challenges they faced in relation to modern technology and such responses are presented in a subsequent section.
4.3.3.4 Student teacher delights in teaching practice supervision by college

Thirty-nine out of 161 (24%) students gave the opinion that they delighted in that TP. supervision by college was corrective. In response to question 9, 21 students out of the 116 who completed the open-ended questionnaire expressed the view that they cherished the corrective nature of practicum supervision done by their lecturers. Some of the statements that were given to support this view were:

S10 *They (college supervisors) explain where I am wrong and suggest ways of doing the right thing.*

S57 *They correct us on schemes of work, lesson plans and teaching strategies.*

S39 *When college lecturers come, they highlight areas of weaknesses and assist with explanations which makes it more of a learning process as it should be.*

S83 *Getting expert corrections.*

The view that student teachers were delighted about the corrective aspect of their teaching practice by the teacher education institutions was also buttressed in the focus groups 5, 7 9 and 10. For instance the following statement was made by one participant in focus group 7:

*They (lecturers) point out areas needing remediation.*

In focus group 9, the following opinion was expressed:

*The supervisors are not fault finding but to correct us (sic). They emphasise use of media. We do not teach without media, never, so now I know to make and use media.*
In focus group 7 one participant had the following statement to make:

_When college lecturers finish they call you, point out mistakes and make suggestions and we then redo some of the work._

Teaching practice supervision was viewed by 21 out of 161 (13%) students who completed the questionnaire as guiding, encouraging and motivating. The following statements provided by the participants support this opinion:

S1 _They appreciate when we perform well._

S15 _Their comments help to build confidence and self-esteem._

S3 _Some of the college supervisors give advice and encouraging comments._

S29 _They advise both me and my mentor._

S45 _Some of the lecturers give motivating remarks that encourage us._

S22 _We are left with copies of supervision crits with guiding comments which we always fall back on._

S16 _Supervision crits are given to show your errors so that you correct them._

Furthermore, 11 out of 161 students (7%) expressed the view that they delighted in the fairness that was displayed by college supervisors and assessors when the student teachers were doing Teaching Practice. Five out of 161 students (3%) appreciated the continuity of teaching practice supervision, another five (3%) students appreciated the counselling aspect of TP and another five (3%) students appreciated the fact that practicum
supervisions that were unannounced. Some statements given by participants with regard to these three aspects of TP which student teachers opined are as follows:

S45 *Continuous assessment keeps students alert and prepared.*

S79 *Assessments are termly.*

S14 *They (lecturers) counsel us when facing challenges.*

S47 *Their unknown visits are very important since we are always prepared.*

Four students (2%) expressed the opinion that they were delighted by supervisors who were realistic in their encounter with student teachers who were doing Teaching Practice. Ten out of 161 students (6%) cherished TP supervision which they viewed as being educative in character. The following statements given by participants support these views about the aspects of teaching practice supervision that student teachers delighted in:

S51 *Supervisors accept situations on the ground.*

S21 *One gets fresh ideas from each supervisor who assesses.*

S108 *I learn a new thing every time I am supervised and assessed.*

The views given by students on the ways in which they cherished Teaching Practice supervision by their lecturers were supported by some lesson observation crits which were in some student teacher files on which lecturers wrote a report on student teacher teaching practice and supervision and assessment. By going through some TP assessment and supervision reports the researcher was able to tell that some students were being supervised at least once a term and in some cases twice a term thus rendering practicum supervision
and assessment fairly frequent and also formative. Some overall comments made by some of the supervisors which testify that some assessments were corrective, educative and motivating are the ones quoted below:

*The student teacher plans his work daily and evaluates meaningfully. The student is hard working and he uses a variety of teaching media and methods. Keep up the good work.*

*The trainee teacher is making good effort. Nonetheless, she is advised to employ learner-centered approaches and should make her evaluation reflective. The anecdotal records lack the “unusual” on pupil behavior. Mere crying after some unpleasant experiences such as being mocked at is not unusual.*

Thus, the views given by STs and some of the documentary evidence the researcher quoted on the forms of student teacher delights obtained from their practicum supervision by their lecturers are in support of views by Graham and Rusznyak (2011) that supervision of students when doing Teaching Practice is aimed at developing the student teachers’ teaching competencies in a guided way and that the purpose of formative feedback to STs is to enhance students’ own understanding of what they are doing, what they are not doing and what they should be doing in order to teach more effectively. For student teacher supervision and assessment to be beneficial, these activities should not be seen as a one off activity but as an activity that runs through the Teaching Practice period (Report of a Peer Learning Activity, 2010 and Rusznyak, 2011).
4.3.3.5 Student teacher appreciation of school based supervision

A summary of elements of school based supervision which student teachers viewed as giving them delight is provided in figure 4.3. The summary is based on participants, responses to question 9 in the student teachers’ questionnaire, questions 7 and questions 8 and 9 in the focus group guide. All these questions sought participants’ views on the forms of delights student teachers derived from school based supervision.
Fig 4.3 Student teachers’ delights in school based supervision and assessment

Twenty-five out of 161 (16%) students opined that they delighted in the formative nature of school-based supervision. When student teachers were asked to give their opinions on what they appreciated about school based supervision in question (9ii), 16 students among
those who completed the questionnaire and nine students in focus groups 5 and 10, pointed out that they delighted in the formative characteristic of school based supervision. In their opinion school based supervision was a daily occurrence which delighted them. Some of the statements given by the participants to support this opinion are as follows:

S24 *Supervisions are a daily occurrence, they keep me working hard.*

S86 *School based supervision is continuous –a daily occurrence.*

S69 *It is formative in the true sense and so it contributes to my professional growth immensely.*

S110 *Their supervision is consistent and it keeps me on my toes and I grow professionally.*

In focus groups 5 and 10 the view that student teachers cherished the formative nature of school-based supervision was also opinioned and the following statements are a testimony of this:

*Mentors correct us every day; they correct us where we go wrong.*

*School administration help us a lot; they check our documentation each and every time- they help us in all aspects.*

Fifteen out of 161 students (9%) all from among those who completed the questionnaire gave the opinion that they delighted in school based TP supervision because it was instrumental to their professional development and overall performance in Teaching Practice. In support of this view point some students gave the following statements:
S103 It (school-based supervision) prepares me for college supervision and assessment.

S104 It is instrumental in preparing for college and external assessment.

Eighteen out of 161 (11%) students stated that they delighted in school based TP supervision since it was guidance-orientated and educative. Some students made the following statements in support of this viewpoint.

S91 School based supervisors cover issues overlooked by lecturers such as the need to have a lesson plan for test.

S69 The school based supervisors give direction on formulation of objectives, class management, discipline and improvisation.

S93 I am learning more from school supervisors’ corrections.

S35 School based supervision enables me to assess my performance.

The opinion that school based supervision was guidance oriented and educative was buttressed in Focus groups 7 and some of the statements to support this opinion that were given are as follows:

Supervisors point out areas needing remedies.

The supervision teaches us responsibility, umm. keeping records, remedial and extension.

The fact that school based Teaching Practice supervision promoted interaction between supervisors and student teacher was highlighted by four out of 161 (2%) students as
something which the student teachers delighted in. Interaction promotes a healthy exchange of ideas. It involves some reflection. Ferrano (2000) says that reflective practice is a critical process in refining one’s craft in a special discipline. Some students had the following statements to make in support of this sentiment:

S74 *Helps me to measure my potential as a teacher, I am also able to reflect on my weaknesses as we discuss.*

S37 *We share experiences. The school don’t just (sic) impose ideas on me they give me chance to examine their ideas and also to give mine.*

Such statements testify to the fact that collegial reflection happens and focuses on intentional improvement. Interaction which is focused on intentional improvement is directed towards goals of Teaching Practice.

Six students out of 161 (4%) gave the view that they delighted in school-based TP supervision since it gave them motivation. Supervisors were regarded as being keen to help and not harsh like some college lecturers. Some comments given in support of this view point are:

S93 *Encouraging comments (by school based supervisors) make me to keep on working hard. They are not fault finders through and through.*

S49 *School based supervisors are not harsh like some supervisors from college.*

S5 *School based supervisors are keen to teach us the skills and methods of teaching in a business-like manner.*
Three (3%) students gave the view that school based supervision gave them some delight since it had a counselling aspect. This opinion is amply articulated by statements made by the participants which are as follows:

S15 *I appreciate school-based supervisors’ advice that concerns life at work.*

S3 *When we are having challenges they counsel us.*

S29 *They (school-based supervisors) advise on how to interact with others at work.*

The sentiments given by student teachers on the ways through which they were delighted by college based and school based supervision while on Teaching Practice are clearly related to some characteristics of effective practicum. To enable STs to become more competent in the professional practice of teaching, supervision should be formative and reflective in order to promote student teachers’ understanding of their actions (Rusznyack, 2011). Both college and school based supervision were regarded as delighting students in that they were both formative. However, only five students (4%) stated that college based supervision was formative while sixteen (10%) mentioned the same in relation to school based supervision. Such a situation could be attributed to the frequency of occurrence of the Teaching Practice student supervision. School based supervision is a daily occurrence while supervision by college may be conducted per student twice or once a semester.

While sentiments made about what delights student teachers were largely the same for both school based supervision, but with varying degrees, the sentiment that student teachers delighted in the interaction that was promoted by school-based supervisor was not expressed as regards supervision by college supervisors. The perceived lack of interaction being promoted by college lecturers may be attributed to some factors such as lecturer
personality and time constraints. Supervision by college lecturers may be a hurried activity when colleges race for time, and when handling large groups of students. College lecturers may not have sufficient time to reflect on action with the student teachers. While 57 out of 116 (49%) students who completed the questionnaire felt positive about their Teaching Practice supervision, 59 (51%) were of a different opinion and they highlighted some issues or challenges they faced in relation to their supervision while they were doing Teaching Practice. They happened to give challenges even if the question required them to state what they cherished about TP. Opinions given as challenges or lack of delights in Teaching Practice supervision were presented under subheading 4.5.

The positive perceptions held by student teachers in this study about their supervision concur with findings in Atputhasamy’s study (2013) which was conducted in Singapore, in which student teachers acknowledged having received sufficient help from the cooperating teachers in suggesting ways to improve student teaching and providing constructive criticism and fair evaluation of student’s teaching. The finding that student teachers in this study viewed Teaching Practice supervision as corrective, constructive and informative corroborates Oppong’s (2013) findings in his study which was conducted in Ghana, titled “Supervisors’ Remarks in Teaching Practice: The Perspectives of History student teachers”. The study found out participants felt positive about supervisor remarks which were very constructive and informative. The finding made in this study that student teachers felt positive about college supervisions which were encouraging and motivating is in tandem with a finding made by McGee (1996). In his study which was conducted at the University of Waikato’s School of Education, some students viewed some lecturer visits as fantastic since lecturers were considered as encouraging. By being constructive, formative
and interactive, TP supervision can serve some of the purposes practicum supervision should fulfill such as those of giving student teacher support, boosting student teachers’ confidence and enhancing the educational development of the ST. That assessments were fair extends a finding by Atputhasamy (2013) that student teachers acknowledged having received sufficient help from co-operating teachers in providing fair evaluation of student teacher’s teaching.

4.3.3.6 Student teacher delights derived from school administration

In response to questions (question 9 in the students’ questionnaire, question 4 in the mentors’ questionnaire and question 7 in the lecturers’ questionnaire and a related question in the focus group guide) which required participants to express what they felt was positive about the school administration while they were doing teaching practice, 60 out of 243 participants (25%) were of the view that student teachers cherished the helpfulness of members of the school administration. Among these participants were 17 students who provided data via the questionnaire, 27 students in focus groups 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 10, fourteen mentors and two lecturers. Some school administrators were viewed as supportive. Sentiments supporting this opinion were put across by some students in the following ways:

S51 They are supportive they understand me as a student.

S14 The head and deputy head understand very well the position of a student teacher.

S50 They monitor mentor-mentee relationships for the good of the student teacher.
S21 They intervene where mentee and mentor problems arise.

S12 The administration gives advice and permission to visit the college regularly. The administration allows use of computers by student teachers.

S72 They provide stationery.

S1 They provide materials to use and we are given opportunity to go for trips.

S74 We are given incentives and stationery.

S24 They respond to my problems urgently.

S19 Teacher in Charge supervises us often.

The ways in which school administration was viewed as being helpful or supportive were varied and the ways reflect the various roles of school administration in as far as dealing with student teachers is concerned. One of the tasks of any school administration is to provide materials for learning and teaching to make teaching easy and effective. In line with this role it was indicated by 19 students that they cherished provision of stationery by school administration.

Student teachers in some respects have needs that are different from fully qualified teachers. The realisation of the unique needs and satisfaction of these needs of student teachers by school administration can naturally contribute to some positive feeling about the administration by student teachers. In line with this point several student teachers felt positive about the understanding of the student teachers’ position by the administration. Eleven students out of the 243 participants (5%) felt positive about being given incentives. Five students out of 243 participants (2%) felt positive about being allowed to use
computers. Seven students out of 243 participants (3%) felt positive about being allowed to go to college when need arose and having problems attended to urgently. While some students expressed ways they felt positive about the school administration, at some other schools as will be presented in some subsequent sections of this chapter, such delights were not highlighted. At the time the research data were generated through the administration of questionnaires, in some schools, teachers were receiving incentives from the School Development Associations (SDAs) to motivate them.

The view that student teachers felt positive about the ways school administration were helpful to them when they were doing practicum was also expressed by 27 students in focus groups 1, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9 and some participants expressed their views as follows:

In focus group 9 participants made the following statements;

*They provide with materials. We are given charts and markers.*

*Personally I do not have problems with administration.*

Another participant responded this way:

*No problems, they are encouraging us to do good work.*

*The administration makes weekly checks of schemes of work. They hold meetings with us after assessing us.*

*Deputy Head advises us to do most planning while at school.*

*I do not have a mentor right now, but the Deputy Head is always assisting.*

In focus group 10 the following statements were made:
Personally I don't have problems with the admin

No problems, they are encouraging us to do good work

In focus group 7 the following statements were made:

Members of the admin call us to have a group meeting after an assessment

We are given stationery for free

In support of the view that student teachers felt positive about the help or support when asked to state the nature of positive experiences student teachers said they enjoyed while doing Teaching Practice, two lecturers noted that student teachers expressed the view that they cherished the support they got from the school administration. One of the lecturers made the following statement:

L18 They (students) say they feel positive about the help in all aspects by the school administration.

In response to question 4 of the mentors’ questionnaire which asked mentors to state the aspects of TP student teachers delighted in when doing Teaching Practice, several opinions were expressed. Fourteen out of 62 mentors gave the view that student teachers delighted in getting support from the school administration to take part in out-of-class and school activities. Fourteen mentors stated that student teachers delighted in being given support by schools to go out on trips organised by schools and in being supported by school administration to go out for ball game competitions. One mentor summed up views on this aspect saying:
Student teachers delight in being given the latitude by school administration to take part in school activities even out of school activities despite their limited experiences.

Nine out of 243 participants (4%) that is to say, five students who completed the questionnaire and four who took part in focus group 7 gave the opinion that they delighted in the democracy which was exercised by school administration when the students were doing practicum. The following statements were made by some of the participants in support of this opinion:

S21 They do not discriminate or segregate me regardless that I am not yet qualified and they share duties fairly.

S36 There is a happy atmosphere. There is use of democratic leadership style.

S80 The administration understands students with genuine problems- illness or social problems.

It was only in focus group 7, that participants also gave the opinion that they delighted in the democracy that the school administration exercised in their interaction with student teachers. One participant had the following statement to make:

We have good relationships, they (administration) even consult us if there are any changes.

Another participant in the same focus group supported this statement by saying:

If we have any problems the school administration tells us to be free to consult.
Being treated fairly is one thing anyone would enjoy in a working environment. Therefore, maybe some students expressed the view that they delighted in the democracy exercised by the school administration, for this noble reason. Since only four participants through the completion of a questionnaire and only four participants in one focus group expressed the view that they felt positive about the fairness they got from the school administration, this could be an indication that in the majority of schools where the participants were doing their practicum, the school administrators were not democratic. One may be perceived as unfair when one fails to consider student teachers’ requests as realistic or when one just imposes opinions on student teachers.

Eleven students out of 243 participants (5%) namely four students among those who responded to the questionnaire and eight in focus groups 3 and 5, in response to the question which asked them to state positive aspects they felt about their involvement or interaction with school administration, stated that they were delighted with the good rapport between them and school administration. Statements given by the participants to buttress that they delighted in the harmony that existed between them and the school administration are as follows:

\[ S66 \text{ We feel at home. We work hand in glove.} \]

\[ S37 \text{ Our relationship is harmonious through and through.} \]

Some utterances that were made in focus groups 3 and 5 back up the opinion that some student teachers enjoyed the harmony that they perceived between them and school administration.
Everything is great, I don’t think there is anyone who is in disharmony with administration.

Asked if the other members felt the same, another participant confirmed this opinion by saying:

There are no complaints.

In focus group 2 one participant quipped:

Communication is okay. Everything is great, no complaints.

In focus group 2 participants also noted that the relationship between them and the school administration was harmonious, although there was some other negative response in the views they expressed. One participant amply put across the opinion saying:

The relationship with the school authority is pleasing, although there is a space for squabbles.

The statement given in the last quote above to the researcher is balanced or realistic. In real life it is not realistic for relationships to be harmonious all the time. Here and there, there might be some misunderstandings. This reality may partly explain the nature of responses given by students in this aspect. Even if the question requested participants to state what they cherished in their relationship with school administrators, some participants gave a combination of aspects they cherished and aspects they did not cherish. The fact that few student teachers indicated that they cherished good rapport between them and the school administration might be an indication that in many schools where student teachers were doing Teaching Practice, there was not much harmony perceived between school
administration and student as perceived by students. This could be attributed, in some cases, to the distance between school heads, deputy heads and even teachers in charge and the student. If students feel too far distanced from the school administration they might interpret that as a lack of a harmonious relationship. May be due to pressure of administrative work, school administrators may assign the student supervising task to mentors and such a practice naturally gives a limit to what student teachers can view as harmonious or unharmonious relationship with school administrators. Nonetheless, some participants did not give the opinion that they cherished anything about their relationship with administration. They stated that the administration did not really delight them in any way. The negative responses that were given related to the research question on student teacher challenges when doing Teaching Practice. So accordingly, responses in this category were presented in subsequent sections of the chapter.

Nevertheless, the researcher’s finding that some school administrators were viewed as supportive of student teachers’ needs and aspirations is in support of Ulvick and Smith (2011) who view the role of TP as being to provide a supported entry to the teaching profession. The finding that student teachers delighted in being given chances to participate in teaching related activities taking place outside the four classroom walls confirms findings made by Ulvick and Smith (2011).Participants in their study highlighted that a good practicum in teacher education is one which allows student teachers to experience the comprehensive teacher role. What student teachers experience during their TP creates their view of the teaching profession.
4.3.3.7 Student teacher positive feelings about the general school staff

The study also sought to determine what student teachers cherished regarding their relationship with other school staff, beside school administration and mentors. Twenty one students out of the 243 participants (9%) namely twelve students among those who completed the questionnaire and nine students in focus groups 7 and 8 gave the opinion that they felt positive about the keenness of school staff to help student teachers who were doing Teaching Practice. The following statements made by some of the participants bear testimony to this view:

S15 They (other school staff) support us on how to write good lesson plans, prepare good media and deliver good lessons.

S3 Most of them (other school staff) are just like your mentor, they help you.

S17 We work as one, everyone helps when you have a problem.

The same opinion that STs felt positive about the keenness by other teachers to help them was also expressed in focus groups 7 and 8 where the participants felt that they delighted in working hand in hand with other school teachers. Some of the statements that were made in focus group 8 include the following:

I have a good relationship with other school teachers. In most cases they give me advice. For instance in my first semester of T.P, one male teacher advised me on proper placing of ticks when marking. This shows a good relationship from someone who is not a supervisor.

Other two participants in the same focus group supported the view by saying:
They (other teachers) can be consulted when my mentor is not around.

They point out mistakes such as spelling errors.

The fact that other teachers were regarded as being keen to help student teachers could be attributed to the general understanding that the task to educate and develop teachers is viewed as collegial, it is not a one man band. In addition, qualified teachers, even if they are not appointed as mentors, may just feel obligated to help STs since they also are products of collegial work.

Ten students out of 243 participants (4%) from those who completed the questionnaire expressed the feeling that they felt positive about the respect that the other school teachers gave to the student teachers who were doing TP. The statements given below which were given by some participants testify to this opinion:

S37 I get respect from teachers; they treat me just as a trained teacher.

S42 They are cooperative, there is no despising of student teacher.

Ten (4% of the participants) students stated that they delighted in that school teachers were partially friendly or friendly to them. They were reportedly not harsh to student teachers. The following statements are in support of this feeling expressed by the student teachers:

S3 Most of them are friendly and helpful in things pertaining to education. Most of them are just like your mentor, they help you.

S5 The school staff is partially friendly as some use us as their servants failing us the chance to work on our documents freely.
The opinion that student teachers delighted in the friendly nature of other school staff was only expressed in some responses to questionnaires and not in any of the focus groups. This could mean that the actual characteristics or personalities of individual school teachers influenced the nature of student responses on what they actually cherished as regards their relationship with other school teachers. Even the tone at individual schools might have influenced the nature of student teachers’ feelings as regards what delighted them in their relationship with other school teachers.

Only two students out of 243 participants were of the mind that they felt positive about other school teachers who were good models in the teaching profession. The following statements were made in support of this feeling:

\[ S17 \text{ To me they (other school teachers) are good models - they are hardworking.} \]

\[ S9 \text{ They are good examples. They are committed though salaries are low.} \]

The view that student teachers felt positive about the role some school teachers performed as good models was only expressed by two student teachers who completed the questionnaire. In focus groups, this opinion was not expressed. This could be an indicator that some teachers no longer are role models in their profession and this could be attributed to the low income school teachers were getting at the time the study was conducted. However, the finding that student teachers felt positive about the support and friendliness they got from other school teaching staff is in keeping with findings made by Ulvik and Smith (2011) who in their study established that a conducive climate is one of the good teaching practice. placement attributes. Student teachers need emotional support plus a TP environment in which they feel safe (Ulvik & Smith, 2011).
Some responses to the same questions which required students to express their views on the forms of delights that they got from other school staff indicated that students did not cherish anything about their relationship with other teachers at the schools where student teachers were doing TP. It is sufficient at this stage to just mention that some student teachers categorically stated that they cherished nothing in their relationship with other school teachers. The school teachers were regarded as too boastful, rude, unhelpful and displaying “I do not care attitude”. These issues were presented in detail in subsequent sections of Chapter Four.

4.3.3.8 Pupil-related aspects that student teachers felt positive about

Question 10 (iv) asked students to state what positive aspects they felt about their relationship with learners while they were doing Teaching Practice and a related question was also asked to participants in focus groups. In response to the question on this aspect, 28 students out of the 243 participants (12%) gave the opinion that they cherished the co-operative spirit which learners displayed. The following statements support this view held by the student teachers:

S103 *The class follow orders without use of force.*

S50 *They participate very well during lessons.*

S66 *They really appreciate the presence of student teachers. They respond positively to our requests. They are supportive in whatever way.*

S115 *They are being co-operative during my last days of T.P.*
The opinion that student teachers felt positive about the co-operation they got from pupils was echoed in focus groups 3 and 9. Some of the statements that were made by some participants are as follows:

_We are in good books. Change of classes end of term pains some pupils. Pupils do as instructed._

Since only a few participants gave the feeling that good co-operation from pupils delighted the student teacher, it is possible that due to the known professional status of student teachers, pupils did not feel obliged to work co-operatively with student teachers knowing very well that they could easily lean on their actual teacher (mentor). That one of the student teachers indicated that the pupils were only co-operative during the last days of T.P could be attributed to the possible change of attitude on the part of pupils probably due to conviction that student teacher was effective, or attitude change for one reason or another.

Another aspect which student teachers felt positive about their relationship with pupils was the respect the student teachers were given by pupils. This opinion was expressed by 15 out of 243 participants (6%), that is to say, 13 students among those who completed the questionnaire and two mentors. Some of the participants buttressed this feeling by saying:

_S15 Pupils respect me just like they do the mentor._

_S10 They give me same treatment as qualified teachers,_

_S12 They give me reasonable respect._

One of the mentors simply said:

_M25 Student teachers delight in being respected by pupils._
In the focus groups, there was no mention that student teachers felt positive about being given respect by pupils. When lecturers were also asked to state the positive experiences the student teachers said they enjoyed while on Teaching Practice, no single lecturer pointed out that the student teachers cherished being respected by pupils. In addition, when some student teachers who responded to the question requiring them to state what positive feelings they had about their encounter with pupils, they just went on to state negative aspects of their relationships with pupils such as being disrespectful and uncooperative. Responses of this nature were dealt with in detail under 4.4.8.

The fact that few participants mentioned that they delighted in their encounter with pupils and that no lecturer gave this opinion could be an indication there was general lack of student teacher respect from pupils. Factors contributing to such a situation could be the general lack of respect of student teachers by those in higher levels namely, administration and mentors and other school teachers, which can easily cascade to the pupils. Pupil cooperation and respect are attributes that contribute immensely to boosting trainees’ confidence and are essential in the educational development of the student teacher.

4.3.3.9 Student teacher delights derived from parents/guardians

Student teachers who filled in the questionnaire were asked in question10 (iii) to state what positive feelings they had in their encounter with parents or guardians of pupils as the student teachers were doing their practicum and participants in focus groups were asked the same. Out of 243 participants, 27 (11%) namely, 19 students who completed the questionnaire, four participants in focus group 6 and four mentors expressed the view that
students felt positive about the co-operation or support they got from parents or guardians. Statements expressing such views were:

S33 and S152 *They support me in projects.*

S18 *They work hand in hand with student teachers.*

S20 *Most of them co-operate very well.*

S81 *There is excellent rapport.*

S83 *They support me in projects and cleaning the ECD classroom.*

S66 *They really appreciate the presence of student teachers. They respond positively to our requests. They are supportive in whatever way.*

S7 *School Development Committee consented to give us incentives.*

Such sentiments were buttressed in focus group 6 where the following statements were made:

*Our relationship with parents is fairly good. Yesterday was a consultation day, this was my second time to do such an exercise. Parents were giving feedback and they were applauding me.*

Four mentors also expressed the view that student teachers delighted in interacting with community and being supported by the community. Basing on the responses given by some participants above, ECD projects and consultation days were some of the activities in which student teachers interacted with parents or guardians and got support from parents and guardians. Some of the participants felt positive about the School Development
Committees’ incentive which they were given. The incentives were provided to student teachers at some schools and not at others. However, the incentives have were scrapped by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education through the Secretary’s Circular Minute Number 6 of 2014 dated 22 April 2014 replacing Circular Minute Number 5 of 2009.

Out of 243 participants 14 (6%) expressed the view that student teachers felt positive about the respect student teachers got from parents and guardians of pupils. Nine students expressed the opinion that they felt positive about the respect the parents and guardians of pupils gave them. In support of this opinion the following statements were made:

S43 They respect me as their child’s teacher and take my advice concerning their child.

S3 They just respect me just like they do trained teachers.

In the focus groups there was no mention that student teachers got some respect from parents and guardians, rather the reverse was mentioned and the issues raised were covered in the subsequent sections of this chapter (see 4.4.7). However, five mentors buttressed the opinion that student teachers delighted in getting respect from parents and guardians.

Out of 243 participants five students (2%) among those who completed the questionnaire observed that an aspect of their encounter with parents or guardians which they felt positive about was parent or guardian openness.

S40 Parents are open with us, they share problems faced by their children with us. They have built an open relationship with us.

S63 They say what they are not happy about.
The view that student teachers felt positive about the openness parents or guardians had towards student teachers was only expressed by five students all of whom were doing their practicum at urban schools. The fact that this opinion was expressed by very few participants, who were in urban areas, maybe due to the fact that in urban settings people tend to exercise freedom of speech more than the majority of people in rural settings. The fact that very few participants highlighted that they delighted in the openness of parents and guardians exercised with student teachers could be that parents deal directly with mentors rather than student teachers in matters concerning their children. An opinion given by participants in focus group 6 relates to this possibility quite clearly. When participants were asked to comment on aspects that delighted or did not delight them in their relationship with parents or guardians, they quickly went on to state that in this aspect “The mentor is answerable.” The extent to which students can relate to parents or guardians may depend on the school or even the degree to which individual mentors are democratic and leaves student teachers to relate with parents and guardians. However, the findings made in this study on the aspects student teachers felt positive about in their encounter with pupils’ parents and guardians do not relate to any of the findings made in the studies which were reviewed in Chapter Two.

4.3.4 Other aspects of TP which student teachers felt positive about

In an effort to get a comprehensive picture of what aspects student teachers felt positive about their Teaching Practice; the question “What else do you cherish or like about your Teaching Practice?” was asked. Participants’ responses to this question are summarised in Fig.4.4.
In response to question 11, out of 116 student teachers who filled in the questionnaire, (27%) noted that while they doing Teaching Practice they delighted in getting monthly allowances. This viewpoint was also expressed in focus groups 6 and 7 by eight participants. Thus, 39 out of 243 (16%) expressed the opinion that student teachers felt positive about getting monthly allowances. At the time the study was conducted the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was giving student teachers an allowance of $250 per month. Some of the participants who completed the questionnaire had the
following sentiment to make in support of the view that student teachers delighted in getting Teaching Practice allowance were:

S43 *The allowance given by the government keeps me going.*

S90 *Earning a wage is helpful and motivating. We can buy teaching resources and even clothes.*

In focus groups 6 and 7 the following statements were made:

One said:

*The allowance I get at the end of 30 days delights me.*

In support another said;

*Remember, when we went for in contact sessions some students were changing suits everyday, which they bought with the allowance.*

*Remember when we were at college no money was coming in our pockets. Teaching Practice allowances are just handy.*

Getting a monetary allowance, might have been a source of delight to some students because money is instrumental in empowering students since it can be used to care for their training and other personal needs. With money student teachers can buy teaching materials which some schools fail to provide. Indirectly, acquisition of clothes while student teachers are on Teaching Practice adds to their self-esteem by being presentable. The finding made in this research that getting practicum allowances was an aspect of TP which student
teachers delighted in, is not consistent with any of the studies the researcher reviewed in
Chapter Two.

Thirty-nine out of 243 (16%) opined that the running of in-contact sessions by teacher
training colleges was an activity student teachers felt positive about. This opinion was
expressed by 10 students among those who completed the questionnaire, 17 participants in
focus groups and 12 lecturers. Sixteen students in focus groups 4, 5, 7 and 8 gave the view
that the running of in-contact sessions by the teacher education college was one way by
which student teacher professional growth was supported when student teachers were
doing TP. Statements made by participants to buttress the feeling that student teachers
delighted in the in contact sessions are as follows:

S103 We have in-contact sessions such that we get assistance in areas of difficulty.

S3 We go for in-contact sessions which are instrumental in furthering our
professional growth while doing Teaching Practice. We enjoy sharing experiences.
In-contact sessions are organised by our college to support our professional
growth.

When asked how this was made possible another participant in focus group 4 quipped:

At contact sessions lecturers keep on reminding us about what we are supposed to
do when doing Teaching Practice.

At in contact sessions, we are taught some aspects, that the lecturers would not
have covered before we went for Teaching Practice and they ask questions about
our experiences.
In focus group 4, participants pointed out that the training college held two in-contact session during the five-semester Teaching Practice. The first one was held in the second TP semester and the second in-contact session was held in the fourth term of the student teacher Teaching Practice. The participants in focus group 4 also reiterated that in-contact sessions were helpful in giving students the chance to share their problems with college lecturers and that lecturers gave them necessary help. In support of this opinion by student teachers, 12 lecturers (60%) noted that college in-contact sessions were organised for students. The following statements were made by some lecturers:

L16 *They come back to college for in contact sessions. They bring problems they may be facing and those are discussed.*

L15 *Students are called back to college to reflect on their Teaching Practice experiences and students say they enjoy these sessions.*

The running of in-contact sessions can be viewed as an example of a strategy for professional growth during practicum. In a number of ways it involves reflective practice on the part of both the lecturer and student teacher. For instance, topics for teaching or discussion at in-contact sessions may depend on observations of student weaknesses that would have been noted on student teacher supervisory trips. As the lecturers establish what exactly they would want to re-teach or teach, they would in one way or another have been involved in some reflective practice. When student teachers share experiences and point out problems they would be facing when doing Teaching Practice they most likely would have been involved in reflective practice. Reflection on action by both lecturers and student teachers takes place as lecturers and students prepare for in-contact sessions. If
properly organised in-contact sessions promote reflective practice and in contact sessions can serve a purpose which has a direct bearing on some objectives of Teaching Practice such as to “provide an opportunity for self-evaluation and discover from strengths and weakness” (Akbar, 2002, p. 2) and allowing student teacher to begin a career-long habit of experimentation and reflection (Report of a Peer Learning Activity, 2009).

Working in a conducive environment was another aspect which was highlighted by 16 student teachers out of 243 participants (7%) Some of the participants had the following to say in support of the opinion that one of the things they felt positive about their Teaching Practice was working in a conducive environment:

   S46 I work at a conducive school. The general outlook of the school appearance and set up provides a good working condition.

   S112 Good working conditions. I am at a competitive spirit filled school.

In focus group 4 and 7 similar sentiments were made as has already been presented in previous sections dealing with forms of delights derived from mentors and members of the administration. Provision of stationery, existence of good relationship between administration, mentors, other staff and being granted the freedom to consult when necessary were some of the things that made Teaching Practice environment conducive. The fact that only a few students expressed the opinion that they felt positive about working in a conducive environment may be due to the fact that students did their Teaching Practice in different environments and so in some schools the working environments might not have been perceived as conducive by some student teachers.
Extending social networks was perceived by eight student teachers out of 243 participants (3%) as one aspect of student teacher teaching practice which they felt positive about in their Teaching Practice. The following statements were made in support of the view that student teaching practice gave students the opportunity to extend social networks;

S1 *Teaching Practice has made it possible for me to get many qualified friends.*

S100 *I get to know people from many walks of life.*

Being a teacher makes it possible for one to establish relationships with colleagues and other groups of people who in one way or another have links with the school. That only a few participants gave the opinion that they felt positive about extending social networks while they were doing Teaching Practice could be an indication that some students may have attributes that contribute to creation of social networks while others may not.

Out of 243 participants, six (2%) students among those who completed the questionnaire gave the view that they felt positive about their practicum which was long enough. At the time the study was conducted, student teachers at teacher education institutions were spending 15 months on Teaching Practice, while those doing their teacher diplomas through Distance Learning were spending 9 months on Teaching Practice and those pursuing BECD at university were spending 6 months on TP. The following sentiments were made by some participants:

S15 *Teaching Practice time is long enough, it gives full practice.*

S115 *I have got enough time to put theory into practice.*
Maybe this opinion could be attributed to the fact that fairly long Teaching Practice duration makes it possible for supervision to be effective and provides adequate exposure to the trainee student.

Twenty two out of 243 participants (8%), that is to say four students who filled out the questionnaire, sixteen mentors and two lecturers gave the feeling that learning other things besides academic was another positive aspect student teachers experienced about Teaching Practice. In support of this view some students made the following statements:

S31 *Teaching Practice teaches other things besides academic. I am learning some social skills.*

S 39 *It (TP) exposed me to new environment and new people thereby learning new life skills.*

These sentiments made by some of the participants are in line with some objectives of Teaching Practice as outlined by Akbar (2002, p. 2) one of which is “to develop personal relationships with others, administrators, teachers, parents and learners.” Two lecturers expressed the view that student teachers say that one of the positive experiences the student teachers had while doing Teaching Practice was interaction with the community. Sixteen mentors also gave the opinion that student teachers delighted in doing things besides academic work. The following statements support this view point:

M13 *Student teachers delight in outdoor sporting and interacting with other schools.*

M1 *They delight in going out for ball game competitions.*
Involvement in school projects, co-curricular activities and accompanying learners on school trips were some of the activities which student teachers stated they enjoyed and this information has already been presented in earlier sections of this chapter. That most students did not give the opinion that they felt positive about learning other things besides the academic could be attributed to the possibility that some students can be engrossed in academic issues rather than anything else when doing. Teaching Practice and that at some schools, students’ attempts and wishes to interact with others may be curtailed by school administration or even mentors of student teachers. However, the finding in this study, that some students felt positive about the Teaching Practice college in-contact sessions mirrors the findings by Ulvik and Smith (2013) who in their study made a finding that participants viewed conducting tutorials for student teachers doing practicum as one attribute of a good practicum in teacher education. At college in-contact sessions, student teachers share experiences and that way exchange knowledge. If properly conducted in-contact sessions give students additional opportunities to solve areas of misconception and add to the levels of confidence of student teachers as the teacher education institution arms them further with necessary understanding of issues regarding their Teaching Practice. The finding in this study that some student teachers cherished that the Teaching Practice duration was long enough to allow student teachers adequate practice correlates with findings made by Gujjar et.al (2010) that student teachers regarded the brevity of their Teaching Practice, which was only between 4 and 8 weeks as a challenge. TP was too short to mean anything to students.

Views by participants depict that there were a number of positive aspects that student teachers felt about their practicum. In a nutshell, they felt positive about some aspects of
their mentoring, supervision, T.P allowance and their relationship with others viz pupils, teachers and parents. Thus, the forms of delights were trainer-linked and school–based. Nonetheless, in relation to these aspects of the TP, student teachers expressed the view that they faced an array of challenges when they were doing practicum.

4.4 Challenges faced by student teachers while doing TP

In an effort to generate data on the forms of challenges that were faced by student teachers when they were doing Teaching Practice, questions were posed on challenges linked to application of didactic theories, mentoring, supervision and assessment, lesson delivery, TP documentation, Information Communication Technology and interrelationships of student teachers with others (administration, learners, parents/guardians).

4.4.1 Challenges faced by student teachers in applying theory learnt prior to teaching practice

Question 12 in the student teacher questionnaire and question 15 in the focus group guide explored student teacher opinions on the forms of challenges the students faced in applying the educational theories which they had learnt before going for TP. Eighty-nine out of 161 students (55%) gave the view that lack of resources was a challenge student teachers faced in an effort to apply educational theories. Forty out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire and forty-five students in all the focus groups gave the view that in trying to apply some principles of educational theories, lack of or shortage of resources was a challenge. Time and lack of actual materials were some examples of resources whose insufficiency or total absence presented themselves as challenges in the student teacher
effort to apply principles of educational theories. The following sentiments were expressed by some participants to support this opinion:

S87 *It requires patience and time on some theories that apply to deviance, yet time is never adequate.*

S47 *Considering individual differences is timeous, one cannot do that all the time. Sometimes we leave out the slow, slow.*

S113 and S50 *There are no resources especially for ECD.*

S48 *There are limited or no resources like play areas, computers, videos, etc.*

S73 *There is lack of resources for the 0-3 year category.*

S10 *It is not easy to apply some of the theories because of time, lack of resources and most of the time is taken to teach examinable subjects. In my setting it is hard to find materials to prepare an environment as recommended by theories.*

S103 *The problem of hot sitting makes it difficult for me to give maximum attention to children as there is little time with pupils inside the classroom and we share the walls, such that I have little space for my charts.*

In all focus groups the challenge of resources was highlighted but it was mostly in relation to lesson delivery. However, in focus group 6, the opinion that lack of or insufficiency of resources hindered student teachers’ attempts to put educational theory into practice was expressed by all the four participants. Two ECD student teachers in that focus group had the following sentiments to express:
In ECD we are supposed to have play centers; but we do not have materials.

In response to this another participant made the following statement;

If they do not buy play materials there is nothing to do.

In Early Childhood Development, emphasis is on the play method and investigation by the child, if schools fail to provide resources necessary for effective learning, classroom practitioners and student teachers may have problems in applying learning theories. The fact that quite a large number of student teachers gave the view that there was lack of or insufficient supply of materials to facilitate the application of the theories they had learnt at college was linked to the economic hardships the generality of Zimbabwe was facing. This was mentioned by 28 out of 161 participants (17%) at the time the study was conducted. Without funds, schools cannot easily supply the much needed teaching and learning resources. The challenge of time may be attributed to the schools’ timetables and to student teachers’ workload. When time is hardly on one’s side, principles such as the need to cater for learner individual differences may not be applied.

Inhibition by the school was stated by 32 out of 161 (20%) as a challenge student teachers faced while doing TP. Twenty four among those who completed the questionnaire and eight in focus groups 5 and 8 student teachers stated inhibition by host schools as a challenge they faced in their effort to apply educational theories. Some participants had the following to say in support of the opinion that schools inhibited application of theories:

S6 Trying to apply some educational theories is seen as time wasting at a hot seating school.
Some schools do not want to hear any other language except English at ECD level.

My mentor is obsessed with using English in Shona lessons at grade 2.

In focus group 5, two students made reference to their previous experience while they were attached to some para-professionals at some nursery school and made the following statement:

*Para-professionals force children to learn in English, which is contrary to policy.*

If you ask them something, they say we do not know.

In focus group 8 it was also confirmed by two student teachers specialising in ECD that in ECD, the medium of instruction is English. However, Zimbabwe’s Language Policy clearly stipulates that children in the pre-schools and infant school are to be taught in their mother tongue (L1) except for English lessons (Sekeni & Dakwa, 2012). There are obvious advantages that are associated with the learning in children’s L1. For instance learners who learn initial reading and writing skills in their mother tongue perform better in school than those whose basic education is fully through a second language and children feel less alienated and develop a positive self concept more when learning in their first language (Sekeni & Dakwa, 2012, citing Langa & Setati, 2006). Most of the participants who gave the view that schools inhibited the application of the language Policy in ECD were attached at urban schools. Thirteen out of 161 participants (8%) highlighted the fact that some schools insisted on the use of English in ECD and added that this was attributable to the fact that English enjoys a higher status than indigenous languages in Zimbabwe as it is the official language and language of instruction at grades beyond grade 3. In addition,
English is an international language. The finding made in this study that trainees were
denied the opportunity to use L1 in teaching ECD children is not consistent with any of the
studies reviewed in Chapter Two.

Large class sizes was another challenge which 25 out of 161 (13%) student teachers
viewed as making it difficult for student teachers to effectively apply the theory they had
learnt before T.P.. One student teacher had the following to say:

   S21 *The number of pupils is too large for purposes of applying the principle of
   individuality.*

In focus group 4 participants buttressed the opinion that classes were rather too big for
comfort so much that even grade one classes were as large as 50.

The challenge of large classes as a factor inhibiting effective application of theories which
student teachers learnt in preparation of TP was stated by participants who were attached at
urban schools. This could be attributed to the fact that primary school classes in urban
areas attract much higher enrolments than schools in rural areas.

Three out of 161(2%) student teachers gave the view that the nature of the school
curriculum was itself a challenge which they faced in their effort to apply didactic theories.
One student had the following to say:

   S30 *The school curriculum is too wide to give justice to slow learners.*

On average nine subjects are studied in the primary school. So related to the issue of the
rather numerous subjects in the primary school is the time constraint. That only three
student teachers ascribed to the view point that the rather numerous subjects in the primary
school curriculum was a challenge to effective application of theory did not quite apply to
some student teachers as in many cases they teach just some topics in a given subject and
not all the topics in a given subject or subjects.

Thirteen out of 161 students (8%) all of whom were among those who completed the
questionnaire expressed the view that mentors stifled attempts by student teachers to apply
principles of the teaching and learning theories which student teachers had learnt in
preparation of Teaching Practice. Some participants had the following to say:

S4 *Theories are not what is on the ground with mentors - hence they complain that
theories are too long methods for pupils to quickly grasp materials.*

S49 *The mentor does not give ample time for practice, she is concerned with pupils
excelling in the tests.*

Shortage of resources, mentor stifling of efforts, too large classroom sizes and nature of
school curriculum were all school linked challenges which were given by student teachers
as challenges which the student teachers faced in trying to apply the educational theories
they had learnt at college when they were being prepared for Teaching Practice.

In addition to the school-linked challenges faced in trying to apply educational theory,
there were some lecturer related challenges which were stated by some student teachers.
Eight out of 161 students (5%) pointed out that the nature of the college curriculum was a
challenge in trying to apply didactic theories. One participant had the following remark to
make:
The 2-5-2 programme makes it sometimes difficult for us students to get enough of the theory, therefore we only apply the little that we were taught and understand.

Five out of 161 (3%) student teachers gave the opinion that lack of confidence on their part to apply theories of teaching and learning was another challenge which they faced. In relation to this view one student teacher had the following to say:

S42 I am afraid of the unknown, I lack the confidence. I did not practice the application of educational theories while at college.

That some student teachers were not confident enough to apply educational theory in their teaching was attributed to the shortness of TP preparatory period by 5 out of 223 participants (2%), which made it difficult to accord student teachers fairly adequate practice in applying some theories in peer and micro teaching sessions. Coverage of educational theories may be just largely theoretical and very little practice is done before they go for practicum.

Twelve out of 161 students (9%) mentioned that some challenges in applying educational theories were related to the theories themselves. Bruner’s and Skinner’s theories were viewed by participants as being problematic in trying to apply them to the letter. In the opinion of these student teachers the educational theories were not realistic and were stifling in nature. In relation to this view some participants had the following opinions:

S16 Some theories are difficult to apply, like inclusive education, pupils cannot cope together.
S26 There are times where psychology theory tricks cannot work, some beating of the pupils is necessary, but law does not permit.

S92 Some of the things do not apply, depending on the grade level, like eyeing a child in grade one, they do not obey, sometimes they need corporal punishment.

S39 Not all pupils respond positively to what theorists suggest. This leaves me to believe that they (educational theories) apply to Western countries not Zimbabwe.

S27 Some theories do not work through and through such as Bruner’s. Some theories are difficult to apply.

S1 When grouped according to ability slow learners have more negative attitude and when employing child-centered methodology some pupils still do not participate.

S 49 The behaviourism theory gives wrong information that pupil behaviour is predictable yet practically it can’t be so.

That the nature of teaching and learning theories limits the extent to which they can be applied may to some extent be influenced by the level of learners, learner individuality and even teacher’s ability. Practically, classroom practitioners may not be able to apply some principles of the didactic theories. The student teacher opinion that some educational theories do not work wholesomely, may be linked to views expressed by some African psychologists like Mwamwenda (1989) who expressed the view that theories like Piaget’s cognitive development theory cannot be taken to be applied wholesomely in African countries since the findings made by Piaget were based on experiments he conducted with
his own children. The researcher’s experience is that Bruner’s theory of instruction may not be followed wholesomely. A classroom practitioner may choose to represent material for learning symbolically first, iconically and enactively last which may be viewed as a contradiction of Bruner’s theory which posited that representation of material should begin from the enactive mode, then to the iconic and symbolic modes. Inclusive education is based on the understanding that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. Children with special needs should have access to regular schools which should accommodate them with a learner-centred instruction which is aimed at meeting learner needs. The researcher’s experience as a secondary school teacher was that the levels of enablement in the schools to meet individual needs of learners are very low. Shortage of time and even materials necessary in inclusive education present themselves as some of the constraints. In addition, teachers are not adequately educated to make the idea of inclusive education a success. At the time this study was conducted, such challenges to inclusive education were present. Opinions by participants that the administration of corporal punishment was a way by which discipline in pupils could be instilled were at odds with what was prevailing in Zimbabwean schools at the time the study was conducted since use of corporal punishment was prohibited.

Nineteen out of 161 students (12%) who completed the questionnaire expressed the view that they faced no problems in applying the educational theory which they had learnt before their Teaching Practice. In the focus groups no other challenges were opined in relation to the application of educational theories except the challenge of student teacher efforts in applying education theories being met with resistance. Probably, those who were of the mind that they did not face any challenges in applying educational theories they had
learnt at college, were attached at schools where efforts by student teachers to apply the learnt theories were not stifled.

4.4.2 Mentor-related challenges faced by student teachers when doing TP

Participants opined a range of mentor–related challenges in their responses to question 13 (in the case of student teachers), question 7 (in the case of mentors), question 10 (in the case of lecturers) question 16 (in the case of focus groups) which all explored participants’ views on the forms of mentor-linked challenges which student teachers faced. A summary of the opinions on this aspect are presented in Fig. 4.5.
Fig 4.5 Mentor-related challenges

- Mentor absenteeism: 10%
- Mentor being undemocratic: 24%
- Mentor’s lack of knowledge: 22%
- Mentor over-emphasis on passing exams: 9%
- Cultural and language differences with mentor: 0.8%
- Teaching approach conflicts: 23%
- Task overload from mentor: 24%
- Denied opportunity to teach main subjects: 6%
- Not allowed to teach practical subjects: 5%
- Lack of mentor motivation to help: 15%
- Mentor despiteful of student teacher: 16%
- Task overload from mentor: 24%
When participants were asked to give their opinions on the forms of challenges they faced with the mentors, 58 out of 243 participants (24%), 25 out of the 116 who filled in the questionnaire and 33 mentors expressed the opinion that mentors overloaded student teachers with work. Much of the work the student teachers were asked to do was teaching and marking. The following sentiments support the opinion that student teachers faced the challenge of being overworked by mentors:

S5 My mentor is very oppressive, she overloads me with work to mark and is often absent on her personal business.

S8 My mentor regards me as her worker.

S11 All classroom work such as marking is left for me to do.

S1 Mentor just leaves unmarked work every time. She gives me the whole class to teach all lessons every day.

S45 Some mentors overwork student teachers with marking and other tasks which makes students tired and causes them to lag behind in updating their records.

As a follow up to the question on which mentor-related challenges student teachers faced, participants were asked to give their opinion on the possible factors causing the challenges student teachers were facing with their mentors. In relation to the challenge of mentor-workload imposed on student teachers, 20 student teachers out of 116 (17%) pointed out that this difficulty was due to the mentor post of seniority while mentor sheer laziness was given as contributing factor by four out of the 116 (3%) students, mentor’s desire to be felt was stated by two out of 116 (2%) students and little mentor education was given as a
cause of leading to mentors overloading students with work by four students out of 116 (3%). In the focus groups the challenge of being given heavy workload by mentors was not mentioned at all. In addition, no lecturers expressed the view that student teachers faced the challenge of being overloaded with work by their mentors. The sentiments of this nature were expressed by several groups of students who were attached at the same schools. For instance, the statements by S5, S1 and S8 were all given by students from one school. This could imply that at some schools some mentors had developed the culture of giving heavy workloads to student teachers. However, 33 mentors in their responses to the question which required them to state mentoring-related challenges which students faced also mentioned that mentors overworked student teachers. In support of this opinion some mentors had the following statements to make:

M48 *Some mentors leave all the marking to students thereby overburdening the student.*

M20 *Demands from the mentor are too high. Student teachers want to do their college work in class during the course of the lessons but they cannot.*

M32 *Being given more work which should be done by mentor.*

M34 *Being given all the load by the mentor who is always absent.*

M56 *Some mentors want student to teach all lessons while they sit.*

In response to question 13(ii) in the students’ questionnaire, 21 out of 116 students (34%) pointed out mentor laziness as a cause of heavy work load given to students by mentors,
while 12 out of 116 (10%) expressed the view that the roles of mentor and mentee were not crystal clear.

Fifty-nine out of 243 (24%) participants expressed the opinion that student teacher effort and creativity were stifled by some mentors. Thirty-three student teachers among the 116 who completed the questionnaire gave the opinion that teaching approaches conflicts between student teachers and their mentors was one of the challenges student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice. The following statements which were made by some of the participants buttress the view that student teachers had teaching approaches conflicts with their mentors.

S11 The mentor bunches topics in one lesson and discourages me on following some lesson steps, for the reason that following all steps is time wasting.

S25 She wants things in her own view only yet I am given a certain procedure that is different from hers by college.

S29 Mentor is hostile to change, teaching ideas differ.

S30 Mentor requires me to take only his teaching methods.

S57 There is a difference in approaches for example I use the thematic approach but she uses the subject based.

S68 The mentor has no idea about the thematic approach and discourages me from using it.
The opinion that there was a conflict involving use of teaching approaches was also highlighted by three out of 20 lecturers. Some lecturers had the following statements to make:

**L4 Some mentors are rigid, they do not want new ideas from student teachers, through college, they resist.**

**L21 There are contradicting expectations by mentor and college.**

Similar sentiments were also expressed by nine participants in focus groups 5 and 8. The following statements support this view that there were mentor-student differences in the use of teaching approaches.

*Mentor expectations clash with college expectations.*

*At college we were taught to formalise learning, as you come this side, some of our mentors teach pupils to pass, which is different from college policy.*

In focus group 8 the following statement was expressed:

*At college they keep on hammering use of pair and peer work, but mentors say there is no time for group work.*

In addition, some 14 out of 62 (23%) mentors also expressed the opinion that student teachers faced the challenge of meeting with mentor resistance in their effort to try to put into practice what they were taught in college. In relation to this view, some mentors had the following to say:
M44 *Mentor does not give student teacher opportunity to practice what the student teacher has to learn*

M39 *Student teachers have to play second fiddle to mentor. They cannot initiate new views of thinking; they have to follow what the mentor wants.*

Question 13(ii) in the student teacher questionnaire, question 7(ii) in the mentors’ questionnaire and question 10(ii) in the questionnaire for lecturers all required participants to provide some possible factors contributing to the teaching approaches conflicts between mentors and student teachers. Eleven mentors and seven students (9% of the participants) gave the opinion that mentors were obsessed with teaching pupils for purposes of passing exams. According to one mentor and two lecturers (1% of the participants) there was lack of mentor orientation by the college. Six students (3%) gave the view that due to hot seating there was a time limit while five others (2%) gave the view that some mentors were educated as teachers long back and were not quite versed with issues being emphasised at teachers’ colleges like the thematic approach which is used in planning and teaching. The education system in Zimbabwe is examination oriented and there is much emphasis on passing in national exams and even tests at school level. So most teachers, (mentors included) are in competition with each other. That way mentors may end up stifling student teachers creativity and denying them the chance to effectively apply what they would have learnt. Such a set up may easily frustrate student teachers when they are doing TP. Damage can be caused if mentors are not prepared to accept student teachers as individuals who bring them a range of experiences and who need to find their own teaching style and if mentor is not abreast with current waves of thinking in teacher development (Maynard, 1997).
According to 29 participants out of 243 (12%) another mentor-related challenge which student teachers faced was being denied the opportunity to teach some subjects in the school curriculum and consequently students are not given enough practice to deliver lessons. Twenty one out of the 116 who completed the questionnaire gave the view that student teachers were not allowed to teach some subjects in the school curriculum. Out of the 21, 15 noted that student teachers were denied opportunity to teach the main subjects of the curriculum by the mentors while six pointed out that student teachers were also not allowed to teach practical subjects of the curriculum. This challenge resulted in student teachers not having ample practice as students were not given adequate time to teach. Some supporting statements are:

*S79 Mentor does not want me to teach Maths, Science and English.*

*S7 Mentor simply teaches the main subjects; Maths, English and Shona, I am denied to teach these subjects.*

*S44 Sometimes when you come with your planned subject they do not let you teach it, preferring to teach it themselves.*

*S45 Mentor does not give student teachers time to gain experience in teaching.*

*S44 When it comes to practical subjects, they do not want you to teach them, preferring examinable subjects.*

*S79 They (mentors) think teaching practical subjects is a waste of time.*

Five participants in focus group 8 also gave the opinion that mentors did not give student teachers enough practice to teach. Two participants made the following statements:
My mentor does not give me adequate time to practise; they feel I might spoil the pupils.

Some of the days they teach all the subjects.

These views were also in tandem with opinions of three out of 20 lecturers who also gave the view that students told them, they faced the challenge of being forbidden by mentors to teach some subjects. In support of this opinion, some lecturers had the following sentiments to make:

L7 Mentors forbid students to teach subjects like Maths and English.

L3 Some mentors are focused on the exam and this leads to the neglect of some subjects like Physical Education.

The practice by some mentors of denying student teachers adequate opportunity to teach main and practical subjects of the school curriculum, contradicts one of the main purposes of Teaching Practice. According to Akbar (2002) one of the objectives of TP is to provide education in all activities which student teachers are going to perform in future during their job as professional teachers. Nonetheless, if student teachers are not allowed to teach some subjects then the teacher development programme can easily fail to meet some of the objectives of Teaching Practice. However, none of the mentors who took part in this study made mention of the challenge that student teachers were being denied ample opportunity to teach some subjects in the school curriculum. It may be that at the schools where the mentors were teaching, mentors were not denying student teachers the chance to teach some subjects in the school curriculum. The challenge that student teachers faced of not being accorded opportunity to teach some subjects was attributed by the participants to the
examination system in Zimbabwe, where only the main subjects are the ones which are examinable. However, the finding which was made in this study that student teachers faced the challenge of the stifling nature of mentors contradicts findings made by McGee (1996) that the teaching style of student teachers differed from that of their associate teachers, yet students enjoyed good rapport and found the opportunity and freedom to experiment with their own new methods. Such differences in the findings could be attributed to different levels of flexibility or rigidity that obtain in individual schools or qualified teachers.

Thirty-seven out of 243 (15%) participants expressed the view that mentor lack of motivation was a challenge student teachers faced when doing TP. Out of the 116 students who completed the questionnaire, 12 highlighted mentor demotivation as one of the challenges which was faced by student teachers. Lack of mentor eagerness to help student teachers was one aspect evident of mentor demotivation, which student teachers pointed out. Students pointed out lack of commitment and no proper assistance on problematic areas. The following statements made by the participants support this view:

   S86 She (mentor) is not motivated to help.

   S51 Sometimes the mentor does not want to help and to communicate.

   S74 Mentor is not willing to supervise my documents.

   S111 Mentor does not give proper assistance towards weaknesses of student.

Five participants in focus group 2 also gave the view that their mentors had no motivation in mentoring students teachers. Two participants in this focus group had the following to say:
Mentors are not quite corrective.

Another retorted:

Some just remain quiet.

Sixteen mentors out of 62 also expressed the feeling that mentors were not eager to help mentees. In support of this view, some mentors had the following to say:

M22 Student teachers face lack of assistance from the mentor.

M32 Students get less assistance from mentor.

M36 Some mentors do not give themselves time to monitor the progress of student teacher, they are unwilling to assist.

Four out of 20 lecturers also pointed out that student teachers gave reports that the student teachers faced the challenge of lack of meaningful professional guidance from mentors. According to L6, “Mentors lack meaningful strategies to assist mentees.” The problem of mentors failing to help mentees meaningfully contradicts one of the key characteristics of mentoring, that mentoring is a human relationship where one person invests energy, time and personal know-how by offering help to the mentee (Ngara & Ngwarai, 2012 citing Cooper & Palmer, 2000). The demotivation noted in some mentors and the mentor unwillingness to assist mentees effectively could be attributed to the possible causes of the challenge which participants noted. Among the possible causes of this challenge, three lecturers and 10 mentors (6%) mentioned the absence of mentor allowance.

Thirty-nine out of 243 (16%) gave the view point that mentor negative personality was a challenge student teachers faced. Eighteen students out of 116 who completed the
questionnaire expressed the opinion that the untoward personality of mentors was a challenge that they faced when they were doing teaching practice. Being undemocratic, cruel and rigid, reserved and despising the student teachers were some of the aspects of mentor personality which student teachers viewed as contributing to the challenges they faced with mentors. Some participants gave the following responses in support of the opinion that the untoward personality of mentors was a challenge which was faced by student teachers as they did Teaching Practice:

   S49 Mentor has some traits of a dictator;-instills some levels of insecurity in me.

   S42 At times you are forced not to follow your scheme because of her.

   S8 Mentor is cruel- regards me as her worker. Mentor is lazy.

   S36 Mentor is jealous of my good social standing.

   S28 Mentor is reserved.

   S9 I am always wrong in her eyes.

   S86 Mentor has the attitude that l can easily spoil pupils’ understanding.

   S42 She shouts at me in front of the pupils.

Four participants in focus groups 6 and five in focus 8 also had the opinion that mentor reservedness was a difficulty some mentors presented and the following statements were made in support of this view:

   Mentors are not quite corrective
In support one participant added:

_Some just remain quiet._

In focus group 6 some participants had the following to say;

_There is a lot to say regarding challenges with mentors. My mentor is too quiet, too soft, not easy to ask her and I feel I burden her._

Five lecturers were in support of the student teacher view that mentors were not helpful to students. One lecturer sort of summarised the view on the untoward personality of mentors as a challenge being faced by student teachers saying:

_L18 Student teachers say they face the challenge of inhuman behaviour of mentor_

Seventeen out of 62 mentors also gave same sentiments that some personality aspects of mentors were a challenge to student teachers. Some of the mentors had the following statements to make:

_M45 Mentors are pompous, unhelpful, rude, not approachable, unfriendly and under-rate student teachers._

_M30 Some mentors influence pupils not to listen to student teachers._

When participants were asked to give causes of this form of challenge that student teachers were facing, lack of desirable mentoring skills was a cause given by 13 out of 243 (5%) participants namely 11 mentors and two lecturers. Nine students (4%) expressed the view that mentors’ exaggerated concern about good class test or exam results was the other cause of the mentors’ untoward mentality. The challenge of being mentored by a mentor
who has untoward personality may be attributed to the choice of mentors by school heads. At times there may be no room to choose the best. In some schools, more than fifteen student teachers may be doing TP at the same school, so there may be little room for school heads to choose good mentors. According to Stanulis and Foder (2009) damage can be caused if students are mentored by teachers who do not have positive mentor character.

Mentor absenteeism was a challenge which was noted by 24 out of 243 (10%) participants. Nine out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire expressed this opinion. In four cases students stated that they did not have a mentor altogether for some duration during their Teaching Practice while in some cases, mentors had some mentees under them but for some reasons were at times not around to execute their mentoring duties. This challenge was highlighted in response to the questionnaire as well as in some focus groups. Some participants had the following to say:

*S53 Absenteeism as an administrator. He is an administrator.*

*S75 My mentor is bogged down with administrative work.*

*S95 Mentor absence from duty leaves me vulnerable.*

Thirteen students in focus groups also expressed the view that mentor absenteeism was another challenge that was faced by student teachers when doing TP. In focus group 9, one participant pointed out that they did not have a mentor for the first two terms of their Teaching Practice. Another participant in focus group 6 also said that they did not have a mentor in ECD (b) at the time the research data were being generated. Two out of 20 lecturers also stated that student teachers expressed the view that they faced the challenge of the absence of a full time mentor. Accordingly, one lecturer had the following to say:
L1 Student teachers face the challenge of having no mentor when one dies, goes on leave or falls ill.

In focus group 7 one participant had the following to say:

*First term I had no mentor. There was no serious learning taking place. I may wrongly deliver so who will be there to correct?*

The finding made in this study which indicated that mentor absenteeism was one of the challenges which was faced by student teachers is in support with findings made by Murphy and Butcher (2009), in a study which they conducted in New Zealand, which showed that student teacher attachment was not inspirational due to mentors’ absence. Continued absence of a mentor renders school-based mentoring less powerful as a resource of influence on student teachers (Hobson & Malderez, 2002) since the purposes of mentoring such as skills enhancement and bridging the gap between theory and practice may not be fully realised.

Mentor lack of knowledge was another challenge which 53 out of 243 (22%) participants pointed out student teachers faced. Lack of knowledge was perceived by participants as presenting itself in two forms, lack of knowledge in the area the student teachers were specialising in and lack of mentoring knowledge or experience. Thirteen out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire stated the problem of mentor lack of knowledge in ECD. Some participants had the following to say:

*S24 Mentor does not have adequate knowledge. She just tells me to teach or consult college.*
The mentor at ECD “A” centre is not knowledgeable. She is just an entertainer of children, but in a directionless way.

Thirteen participants in focus groups 5, 6 and 8 expressed the opinion that mentors’ lack of knowledge was a challenge. For example in focus group 5, one participant pointed out:

*In ECD there are para-professionals ...you ask them something, they say we do not know it.*

Ten out of 20 lecturers noted that some mentors lacked skills of mentorship and some of them made the following sentiments:

- **L19** *ECD mentors in private schools may be untrained.*
- **L17** *Some mentors do not meet roles of modeling.*
- **L6** *Mentors lack meaningful strategies to assist mentees.*

Some mentors also buttressed the opinion that lack of knowledge on the part of the mentors presented a challenge to mentees. Seventeen out of 62 mentors pointed out that mentors were not educated in ECD and some were not well-versed with supervision procedures. Mentors also lacked skills of mentorship and were not well versed with supervision procedures. In addition, mentors’ demotivation was another challenge which resulted in them being unhelpful to student teachers. These findings corroborate findings by Kourieous (2012) that participants showed dissatisfaction in the supervisors’ limitations in the knowledge base as regarding subject content and content specific pedagogy. The finding made in this study that mentors lacked relevant knowledge and conducted superfluous supervision is in agreement with Lombardi (2001) who made the finding that
supervisors were found not to be confronting bad or mediocre teaching. That supervision of Teaching Practice was superficial also supports Murphy and Butcher (2009) whose study established that mentors did not contribute to student learning as they merely signed off documentation rather than actively engaging in mentoring.

There is a problem if a mentor who is less knowledgeable is paired with a student teacher since the mentor would not have anything to show case to the student or even to coach a mentee. An effective mentor should be qualified and experienced. Engaging inexperienced and less knowledgeable mentors can easily compromise the quality of student teacher Teaching Practice experience.

Only two out of 243 participants that is to say two out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire gave the opinion that cultural and language differences between the mentor and student teachers was a challenge which some student teachers faced. One of the students had the following to say:

\[S71\] Language and cultural differences complicate communication.

Most likely students who experienced this problem were attached at some schools where the L1 of the majority of pupils was not L1 of the mentee. In Zimbabwe, primary schools can teach both of the two main indigenous languages or one of the indigenous languages. Some mentors are obsessed with using their L1 even if they are aware that their L1 is not L1 of the mentee. Such a scenario can easily frustrate the mentee. Since only two students pointed out the challenge of cultural and language differences between mentee and mentor, it might imply that teacher education colleges were careful to attach student teachers at schools where the main indigenous language was also spoken by mentee.
This study established that mentors were traditional and undemocratic, as they did not allow student teachers the opportunities to try new ideas. This finding corroborates Salleh and Ton (2003) who in their study established that one of the teacher mentoring challenges in Shanghai was the limited extent to which novice teachers could experiment with new ideas. Nonetheless, the findings made in this study that issues of large classes, and being denied adequate opportunity to teach some subjects in the primary school curriculum were challenges faced by student teachers do not mirror any findings in the studies which the researcher reviewed in Chapter Two.

While several mentor-linked challenges which student teachers faced were stated by participants, 33 student teachers out of 243 participants (28%) gave the opinion that they faced no challenges with their mentors. This view was given by 33 students among those who completed the questionnaire. For instance the following statements were made:

S75 *No problem, because I am given enough support.*

S19 *So far so good no problems.*

S15 *No problems, the mentor helps me to have interesting and effective lessons. I appreciate being under the mentor.*

Such views buttress opinions that some students gave when they were asked to state the positive aspects the student teachers experienced about the mentoring they got while doing Teaching Practice. So it would imply challenges highlighted depended on where one was doing their Teaching Practice and the characteristics and personality of the mentor. The data generated from participants on their views on mentor-linked challenges are in tandem with Allen (2002) who says challenges to mentoring may hinge on inadequate mentoring,
low mentor motivation and inability to practise ethics of mentoring. Mentor-linked challenges could be said to be school and college related. Choice of mentors is entirely a school based task, while mentoring education may be the task of college and schools to some extent.

However there was an opinion that mentees themselves presented some challenges to the mentors and as a result some mentors could not help mentees efficiently. This opinion was expressed by eight mentors out of 243 participants (3%) who noted that there was lack of co-operation or resistance from mentees. When these participants were asked to state some mentor-related challenges which students faced, they went on to give the opinion that student teachers were the ones giving problems. Some of them had the following to say:

L14 *Mentors face problems of students not wanting to co-operate.*

M53 *At times students are not willing to be helped.*

M32 *Student teacher is not co-operative.*

M58 *Some students are not forthcoming with their difficulties.*

Since only eight participants expressed the view that student teachers presented challenges to mentors as evidenced by student teachers’ lack of cooperation, this could be an indication that the majority of students worked in co-operation with mentors. This in turn could imply that teacher education colleges had done a good job in emphasising the need for collegiality between student teacher and mentor. However, cases of student teachers not cooperating with mentor could be attributed to individual differences between mentor and mentee and differences in personality.
4.4.3 Supervision and assessment challenges faced by student teachers

Question 14 in the student teacher questionnaire, question 8 in mentor questionnaire and question 11 in the lecturers’ questionnaire all required the participants to give their views on supervision and assessment challenges which were faced by student teachers whilst they were doing practicum. In addition, participants were asked to give possible causes of the supervision and assessment related challenges that were faced by students. Question 14 in the mentors’ questionnaire and 17 in the lecturers’ questionnaire also sought information on causes of challenges students faced when doing TP. In focus groups related questions were also posed.

The lack of adequate ECD knowledge by Teaching Practice supervisors was highlighted as one of the challenges student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice by 64 out of 243 (26%). This opinion was given by 36 out of 116 students among those who filled out the questionnaire. Some statements which were made by participants which support the view that student teachers had the challenge of supervisors who lacked adequate ECD knowledge are given below:

S24 General Course lecturers misguide, they know little about ECD.

S48 General teachers and general course lecturers give us little help since they are not equipped with the ECD programmes.

S50 Sometimes general lecturers come for supervision of the ECD student teacher of which they lack information.
General course lecturers, mentors and administration are not well versed with the ECD programme.

According to nine participants in focus groups 1 and 6, ECD mentors were still not qualified in ECD and were not very knowledgeable. At the time the study was carried out some primary school teachers were pursuing the Bachelor of Early Childhood Development degree to boost their knowledge of ECD. In focus group 6, participants had the following to say:

Lecturers from General Course supervise ECD

They have inadequate knowledge of ECD. For example in the aspect of play areas and they have contradicting remarks.

Five out of 20 lecturers also pointed out that student teachers gave information that being supervised by supervisors with very little knowledge was one challenge that student teachers faced. Thirteen mentors out of 62 also buttressed the opinion that lack of supervisor knowledge was a challenge which some teachers faced when doing Teaching Practice and one of the participants made the following statement:

M48 The student teachers face the challenge of being assessed by someone who has no knowledge about the department for example ECD.

When participants were asked to give possible factors causing this challenge of student teachers being supervised and assessed by lecturers and mentors who did not have adequate knowledge, 39 students, nine mentors and five lecturers gave the recent introduction of ECD education programme as the contributing factor to this challenge.
Thus 53 out of the 243 (22%) expressed this view. The other reason given by 11 out of 243 (5%) participants, namely four lecturers and seven mentors was that lecturer supervision was not confined to lecturer specialism, that ECD was still fairly new and most lecturers had not been ECD teachers before was given as a cause of little supervisor knowledge by 20 out of 243 (8%) namely five lecturers, 10 mentors and 10 students. The ECD training programme was introduced in 2004, so ECD specialist were still few in schools and at training colleges lecturers specialised either in ECD only or General Course but when going for TP supervision lecturers who were not ECD specialists supervised and assessed ECD students. The reverse was also being done, yet in the study there were no indications that General Course students were disadvantaged by lecturer lack of knowledge in the General Course. Maybe such a scenario could be attributed to the vast areas of specialty knowledge areas ECD has.

Twenty nine out of 243 (12%) participants namely 25 students, one mentor and three lecturers gave the opinion that one of the challenges student teachers faced with their assessment and supervision was that supervisors were not helpful. In support of this opinion, some students made the following statements:

*S46* At times the supervisors do not give a chance to ask or even ask for their help since they come in a hurry.

*S50* Some lecturers are reluctant to assess me in my area of specialisation which is the Home based programme.

*S67* Some supervisors come rushing to finish.
Some lecturers are not comfortable in assessing me while I am practising on the home based children and facilitating learning in our outdoor activities.

Some supervisors and assessors do not want to walk from the school to the village where the child would be found.

Related to the unhelpfulness of some supervisors and assessors, one out of 20 lecturers pointed out that some lecturers did not know the difference between supervision and assessment. The practice in colleges is that the supervision and assessment of student teachers can take place simultaneously. Nonetheless, if lecturers focus so much on the awarding of marks and fail to help student teachers to appreciate their weaknesses and strengths, then Teaching Practice supervision can be rendered useless. Some student teachers highlighted that supervisors were not helpful since they were just difficult, gave discouraging comments, concentrated on failing students rather than guiding them and put final mark before discussing with student. Statements given by some participants reinforce these views:

S25 The supervisor puts the final mark before discussions with the student like in grade 1, there is pre-formal learning but supervisor criticises a student for not writing on the chalkboard.

S40 Some supervisors do not listen to your problems before assessment.

S42 They come wearing heavy faces.

In support of these views one mentor out of 62 had the following to express:
Some lecturers act as inspectors, instead of guiding their students so as to improve on weaknesses.”

One lecturer out of 20 also concurred that student teachers gave some reports saying that there was lack of suggestions on improving performance and another lecturer reported that student teachers gave reports that supervisors and assessors did not give student teachers chances to explain grievances or obtaining situations that negatively impacted on their teaching. The challenge of supervisors’ uselessness could be attributed to time constraints and not being well-versed in ECD or sheer lack of knowledge on purposes that Teaching Practice assessment and supervision are supposed to serve or even supervisor/assessor acceptable personality. The challenges of supervisors’ lack of knowledge and supervisors’ failure to help student teachers meaningfully renders Teaching Practice supervision and assessment ineffective in helping student teacher to learn. According to Rusznyak (2011 citing Marrow, 1999), a constitutive professional goal of teacher education is to enable others to become more competent in the professional practice of teaching.

Forty-eight out of 243 (20%) participants gave the view that conflict of requirements by Teaching Practice supervisors was a challenge which student teachers faced when doing practicum. Twenty three out of 116 students among those who responded to the questionnaire pointed out this challenge. Supervisors and assessors had differing expectations, opposing views and made contradicting suggestions. In support of the opinion that suggestions and requirements or expectations by supervisors and assessor were contradictory some participants had the following statements to make:

S17 Every supervisor tells different things either about scheming or planning.
Lecturers have differing expectations on one thing, thereby creating confusion.

In grade one there is pre-formal learning but supervisor expects written work on walls yet at grade one, learning is pre-formal.

Supervisors make different comments on how to evaluate.

School and college are not speaking the same voice.

Mentors have different views on record keeping.

Five participants in focus group 9 also viewed supervisor contradicting expectations as a challenge which they faced. Two participants had the following to say:

Supervisors give mixed bags of ideas, they give opposing ideas.

They do not give one thing to follow.

In addition, four out of 20 lecturers also noted that student teachers gave reports of the challenge of contradictory expectations of supervisors. One of the lecturers made the following statement in support of this opinion:

Some areas of specialisation e.g. ECD need specialised close guidance but this is not practically possible on the ground as any lecturer is out on supervision to supervise any student

Furthermore, 16 out 62 (26%) mentors also highlighted that contradictory requirements from lecturers were a challenge which student teachers faced. ECD and General Course lecturers had differing expectations. So variation of expectation could be among lecturers specialising in the same field (General Course or ECD) or among lecturers from different
areas of specialisation (General Course versus ECD) or between school and college supervisors. Thus, the sources of contradiction were many. The forms of contradictions can easily defeat the purpose of feedback on students which is supposed to enhance trainees’ own understanding of their actions, assumptions, reasonings and decisions (Rusznyak, 2011).

When participants were asked to state possible causes of forms of contradiction presented by Teaching Practice supervision, lack of appropriate lecturers’ and teachers’ knowledge in student areas of specialisation was given as a cause by 10 students, two lecturers and four mentors making together 16 out of 243 (7%) among those who had stated the challenge of contradictory comments from supervisors. Lack of school/mentor induction by college was a cause given by two mentors and two lecturers (2%) and the assumption that every supervisor knows was a reason given by one lecturer.

Assessor bias or unfairness was a challenge 45 out of 243 (19%) participants opined. Among the 45 twenty-two out of 116 students from among those who filled out the questionnaire, conceived this challenge. Some of the participants gave some accounts to substantiate the opinion that assessor bias was a challenge some students faced while they were doing Teaching Practice which are as follows:

S22 Some assessors are not that fair.

S30 Lecturers short change marks.

S44 Sometimes the assessments are based on the mood of the lecturer.
Lecturers do not know the level student teachers are in. Sometimes they compare students from different categories (intakes) and end up expecting more than expected.

Sometimes supervisors are too harsh, they sometimes have no time to listen to student teachers explanations and expect beyond students’ capacity.

Ten students in focus groups 1 and 2 also expressed the opinion that assessors were not objective. Some participants in focus group 2 had the following to say:

Supervisors are ever serious u-u-.

Some score 60, 60, 60 although presentations are different.

Three out of 20 lecturers and 10 out of 62 mentors buttressed the view that student teachers faced the challenge of subjectivity on the part of supervisors. The given marks were sometimes questionable. When participants were asked to give possible causes for assessor bias, some nine students (4%) pointed out that some supervisors assessed students while they had a lot on their minds. Fifteen students (7%) gave the opinion that sex bias was a cause of supervisor subjectivity and three students (1%) gave the view that some lecturers were authoritarian. Supervisor bias can result in student teacher getting demotivated thereby hindering effective student teacher’s professional development.

Forty eight out of 243 (20%) participants gave the opinion that the untimely nature of Teaching Practice supervision visits presented challenges to student teachers. Supervision visits were conceived by four out of 116 students (among those who filled in the questionnaire) as coming too early after the beginning of the Teaching Practice semester.
T.P supervision visits were conceived as delayed, by nine out of 116 students and unannounced by nine out of 116 students. In relation to these undesirable characteristics of Teaching Practice visits, some participants made the following statements:

S13 *They (assessors) just appear in the school without notice and this results in forced shifts in the school programme.*

S30 *Supervisors from college come way after my lessons are done.*

S5 (In the first term of semester) *Supervisors came very early for assessment before I was established. hence finding the classroom not equipped with learning charts and Science corner, thus leading to a low mark.*

S83 *There was one term, I was not supervised.*

Nine participants in focus groups 6 and 9, considered college supervisions as coming in too early, just two weeks after opening. Nonetheless, some participants like those in focus group 8, did not view too early Teaching Practice supervision visits as a challenge, since according to the participants these early visits kept students on their toes. One participant had the following to say:

*Supervisors come early and focus on grey areas and we quickly attend to grey areas.*

Maybe too early Teaching Practice supervisions were viewed as a challenge by some students as student teachers would have little to present or exhibit, which would ultimately impact negatively on scores they would obtain. Too early supervisions also may have the tendency of limiting areas of discussion, thereby stifling the supervisors’ effort to help meaningfully.
Seventeen out of 243 (7%) participants, namely six out of 20 lecturers, pointed out that there was some under supervision of students on Teaching Practice by college. Some two lecturers had the following to say in support of this view:

$L16$ Some schools do not do much in terms of supervision and lecturers spend little time supervising.

$L20$ Visits by college are few.

Eleven out of 62 mentors also expressed the view that college supervisions were untimely and that some mentors did not adequately supervise students. This view is in line with one mentor-related challenge which was raised by student teachers and was presented in earlier sections of this chapter. According to the 10 mentors and six lecturers (7%) who expressed the view that Teaching Practice supervision visits were untimely and inadequate, this challenge could be attributed to the large numbers of students lecturers were handling and time constraints in TP supervision. Assessment and supervision of student teachers are some of the mechanisms which are intended to make Teaching Practice a beneficial experience to student teachers. However, if these mechanisms lack the necessary qualities like adequacy, timeliness and appropriateness Teaching Practice may easily be made a less beneficial experience to student teachers.

In response to the question that required participants to state some TP supervision related challenges that were encountered by student teachers while doing Teaching Practice, 10 out of 243 (4%) participants, all of whom were students among those who completed the questionnaire gave the view that they did not face any challenges with their TP supervision and assessment. This opinion buttresses some of the opinions which were given by
participants on positive aspects relating to their supervision. Such differences could be attributed to the different schools student teachers were attached to for Teaching Practice. At some schools mentors and administrators supervised student teachers adequately. Eight of the student teachers who indicated that they did not face any TP supervision related challenges were in the General Course programme. In addition some students might have been lucky to be supervised timeously and to be assessed by fair and helpful lecturers and mentors unlike those who gave the view that they faced TP supervision related challenges.

4.4.4 School administration related challenges

Being overloaded with school activities by school administration was a challenge which 39 out of 243 (16%) participants among whom were 19 out of the 116 student teachers who completed the questionnaire. However, in the focus groups this opinion was not expressed. May be at the schools where focus groups were held school administration did not give too many duties to student teachers. Seven out of 20 lecturers also expressed the view that work overload by the school administration was a challenge student teachers reported they faced. In support of this feeling, 13 out of 62 mentors also expressed the view that student teachers were given too many school duties by school administration. The following statements support the opinion that school administration gave student teachers too many tasks to perform:

S6 School administration demands more than we can afford.

S25 I was asked to work as a relief teacher for a long time.

L5 Sending student teachers on non-ending errands such as school trips is a challenge student teachers face.
They expect them (student teachers) to do all the donkey work.

Work overload is not healthy to any worker at any level. However, when student teachers are overloaded with tasks by school administration as well as mentor (as has already been presented) Teaching Practice may not be an enjoyable time and work overload may affect student teacher performance as a whole while doing Teaching Practice.

Forty one out of 243 (17%) participants responded that school administration failed to provide students with materials necessary for effective teaching and learning. Seventeen out of 116 student teachers who completed the questionnaire, seven out of 20 lecturers and four out of 62 mentors gave the opinion that school administration did not provide student teachers with materials for teaching and learning.

They give no books, no stationery.

They give no stationery to us students.

Thirteen participants in focus groups 6, 4 and 2 were also in support of the view that school administration did not provide student teachers with curricular materials. In focus group 6 the school administration did not provide stationery to students but provided stationery to class teachers. In focus group 4, participants gave the opinion that the administration did not provide textbooks in practical subjects and social studies. In focus group 2, one participant said that when doing assignments they were not allowed access to the school internet facility. One of the duties of a school administration is to provide materials for teaching and learning but failure to do so can affect quality of teaching and learning especially by student teachers. However, since the opinion that school administration did
not give student teachers stationery was expressed by fairly few participants, this might imply that in many schools student teachers were being supplied with stationery.

Another Teaching Practice role which school administration failed to perform according to nine out of 243 students (4%) namely eight out of 116 students who filled out the questionnaire and only one lecturer was failure to supervise students. One participant made the following statement in support of this opinion:

\[ S48 \text{ They (administration) do not look into our schemes so as to help us do it the proper way.} \]

This form of challenge was not expressed in any focus group and by any mentor. This might imply that in most schools, school administrators were performing their Teaching Practice roles quite well. Views given by students on what positive aspects delighted them in their relationships in earlier sections of this chapter seem to support the view that participants perceived that school administrators were doing their Teaching Practice related roles satisfactorily.

Twenty-two out of 223 (10%) participants expressed the view that school administration was not supportive. Fifteen out of 116 students who filled in the questionnaire expressed this opinion. Some school administrators were said to lack knowledge in the area of specialisation of student teachers. Some were reported to be insensitive to student teacher requirements or problems and others were said to be harsh and defamed student teachers as stated by some of the participants who completed the questionnaire. The following statements made by some of the participants support these views:
S11 School administration is passive to some of my requests. Some problems go unsolved.

S22 Our voices are not heard.

S46 At times if you ask them to supervise they do not respond until the last minute.

S9 We are not allowed to go for CDS.

S28 They are sort of scornful.

S30 Treat us as kids.

S57 They do not understand the home based programme.

In focus group 6 in which four students participated, the challenge of student teacher defamation was also highlighted while the other challenges related to school administration such as lack of knowledge in student teachers’ areas of specialisation and restriction were not expressed in this focus group and the other focus groups. Maybe some school heads had some sound knowledge of ECD demands like the home based programme. In focus group 6 some two participants had the following remarks to make;

The way student teachers are introduced to pupils is not good. They tell pupils we are students and this affects our relationship with learners.

There was a time when as a student teacher I was alone, when the relief teacher came, they introduce them saying, “You know the class did not have a teacher.”

In addition, three out of 20 lecturers noted that student teachers informed them about the challenge of denigration or defaming student teachers faced from school administrators.
Only four participants out of 243 (2%) gave the view that students faced the challenge of sexual harassment from school administrators. Two participants out of 116 student teachers among those who completed the questionnaire expressed this view. One of them had the following to say:

_S104 They propose love to student teachers, especially men._

This opinion was also expressed by two out of 20 (10%) lecturers, but not by any mentor. Since only four participants gave the opinion that school administration harassed students sexually, this could be an indication that very few school administrators sexually harass student teachers. This could be attributed to the fact that administrators avoid possible consequences of student teacher sexual harassment. In any case, school administrators are in _loco parentis_ in their relationship with student teachers. So, it would seem many school administrators, at the time the study was conducted, were observing this requirement.

Thirty-five out of 116 (30%) students indicated that they did not face any school administration related challenges while 30 (26%) student teachers referred the researcher to the responses they had made earlier, which indicated the forms of delights student teachers derived from their relationships with school administration. Twelve students simply wrote not applicable to the question which required them to state administration-linked challenges.

### 4.4.5 Parent/guardian related challenges

When doing Teaching Practice, student teachers may interrelate with the parents or guardians of pupils. The study thus sought also to determine if student teachers faced any challenges from the parents or guardians in their interaction with them. Responses related
Seventy-three out of 243 (30%) participants expressed the opinion that parents and guardians of pupils did not cooperate with student teachers. Forty-nine out of 116 students from those who completed the questionnaire expressed the view that the lack of parent or guardian co-operation was one of the challenges student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice. This opinion was expressed by some three out of 20 lecturers and 12 out of 62 mentors. Forms of lack of parent co-operation were varied as is depicted in the statements that some participants made:

- S37 Parents do not supply curriculum material, books and exercise books.
- S22 I face resistance of [sic] parents to come to see me when I ask them to do so.
- S80 ECD parents do not support community projects. We give false reports in documents.
- S24 Parents are not co-operative they don’t participate in our community projects.
- S46 Parents do not respond to student teachers’ call even in matters concerning their child. Some send children without anything to use in school e.g. books, pencils or even crayons.
- S1 They do not help children with homework.
- S7 They refuse with children for morning work.

From the 49 students who gave the view that they faced the challenge of lack of parent/guardian co-operation, 21 highlighted that ECD parents did not participate in community
projects, which the student teachers planned to do with the parents or guardians. That parents/guardians did not help pupils with homework was expressed by 13 students. In focus group 6 participants had the following to say related to the lack of parent/guardian co-operation regarding their involvement in community-based projects:

\[\text{When it comes to community based project, it is a challenge, when practically you call parents they do not come.}\]

\[\text{We just complete records- but we won’t be doing them.}\]

When participants in this group were asked why parents/guardians were not co-operating with student teachers in doing community based projects, two had the following to say in reply:

\[\text{Time is limited, Friday afternoons they do not come.}\]

\[\text{We just think about them (community based projects) and complete reports.}\]

The view that parents or guardians did not participate in community programmes was also shared by 11 out of 62 (18%) mentors and one of them had the following statement to make.

\[\text{M1 Parents do not go for projects.}\]

Nine participants in focus groups 6 and 8 were also in support of the view that parents and guardians did not take part in the community projects the student teachers would have organised for them and other activities. The following statements made by participants in focus group 8 buttress this view point:
Parents do not cooperate with teachers. Due to hot seating, we try to cover content during off sessions which is not formalised but parents require their children to be at home. It becomes a problem to cover some content.

Five mentors and 21 students (11% of the 243 participants) pointed out that time constraint was a contributing factor to the non-participation in community based projects by parents/guardians as many ECD parents/guardians belong to the working class. Another cause given by three mentors (1% of the 243 participants) was parent ignorance on the importance of school organised ECD community based projects.

Forty–nine out of 243 (20%) participants pointed out that parents and guardians regarded students lowly. Low regard of student teachers by parents or guardians was a challenge 25 out of 116 students from among those who completed the questionnaire stated. This opinion was expressed by nine out of 62 mentors and eight out of 20 lecturers. Being looked down upon can negatively affect student teacher operations while doing Teaching Practice. Student teachers may lose self-esteem and motivation and these can affect their Teaching Practice experience by rendering it unpleasant. The following statements made by participants buttress that being regarded lowly by parents or guardians was a challenge student teachers faced when doing Teaching Practice.

S10 Some parents do not have respect for me as they regard me as being unqualified.

S30 Parents are not confident in me.

S102 There is no trust, they think you are not good enough.
ECD parents/guardians do not trust ECD student teachers.

Ten participants in focus groups 2 and 10 buttressed the opinion that parents and guardians had low regard of student teachers. One participant in focus group 10 had the following to say:

Parents say “i-i vana vedu vaurawa” (literally meaning our children are being killed) when they hear that the class teacher is away.

In support of this opinion some lecturers had the following to say:

L15 Community expectations are not always met by student teachers.

L17 Some ECD parents/guardians express concern over poor communication skills displayed by ECD student teachers in former Group A schools.

It would seem parents expect good teaching from student teachers and this implies the need for colleges to equip student teachers with teaching skills thoroughly before students go for Teaching Practice to reduce some fears parents might have about student teacher ability in handling pupils. The challenge of low regard for student teachers could be attributed to the general understanding held in the education system that students are still half-baked and so are not competent enough and past experience of parents/guardians with students who do not perform well may lead to painting student teachers with the same brush. Also inadequate college student preparation for Teaching Practice may cause high levels of inefficiency of student teachers and this may cause parent/guardian to have low regard of the student teachers. In focus group 6, participants gave a rather queer response when they were asked to state some challenges if any, they faced with parents/guardians. The
response the researcher got was simply, “The mentor is answerable.” May be such a
response meant that student-teacher relationships were not harmonious and in most cases
parents/guardians just deal with mentors. Such a practice, however, could easily stifle
student teachers’ experiences when doing Teaching Practice.

Thirty-nine out of 243 (16%) participants gave the opinion that another challenge which
parents or guardians presented in the operations of student teachers was parent or guardian
lack of knowledge of some aspects in the field of specialisation of the student teacher. This
opinion was expressed by 23 students who filled in the questionnaire, 12 mentors and four
out of 20 lecturers. In support of the mind that parent/guardian’s lack of knowledge in
ECD was a challenge some student teachers faced some participants made the following
statements:

S57 They expect their children to be reading and writing in ECD (a) and (b).

S58 They look at pre-school learning as something useless.

S69 They do not understand ECD requirements.

S65 Parents compare with other unregistered pre-schools that do not know
government policies. They want ECD children to be taught writing.

L4 Parents are not versed with trends and demands in ECD.

The challenge that parents or guardians were not knowledgeable about ECD and its
requirements was attributed to the fact that the formalisation of ECD in schools was a
fairly new development in the Education system in Zimbabwe by 15 out of 243
participants. This opinion was expressed by four lecturers in their responses to question 13
which requested them to state barriers to effective TP and 11 students. Misconceptions about ECD by parents may affect student operations as they might lose confidence in doing the right thing. In relation to the question which sought student teachers’ opinions on the forms of parent-related challenges student teachers faced, 28 students felt that they did not face any challenges with parents. This is an indication that challenges faced by student teachers varied from school to school and the opinion that some student teachers did not face any challenges from parents/guardians supports some opinions given on aspects that student teachers felt positive about their relationships with parents and guardians which were presented under 4.3.3.8.

4.4.6 Pupil related challenges

The study also sought to establish if there were any pupil related challenges which student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice. Lecturer responses to question 12, mentor responses to question 8 and student teacher responses to question 10 in the respective questionnaires provided data on pupil-related challenges which student teachers faced when doing TP. That pupils regarded student teachers lowly was a challenge that 66 out of 243 (27%) participants opined. Among these, were 38 out of 116 student teachers among those who completed the questionnaire, seven out of 20 lecturers and 16 out of 62 mentors. Participants had the following to say in support of the view that student teachers were looked down upon by learners:

S45 Sometimes pupils know that you are a student teacher and they tend to be disrespectful.

S49 Some think I know little, they lack respect.
M41 Lack of respect because some student teachers show signs of lack knowledge and children can note that especially those in upper grades.

L18 If they know that student teachers are not yet fully qualified, learners respect class teacher at the expense of student teachers.

Fourteen participants in focus groups 7, 8 and 9 buttressed the opinion that student teachers faced the challenge of being regarded lowly by pupils. Some participants in focus group 8 had the following sentiments:

*When we were introduced, it was said “We have student teachers here.” We are labeled and pupils’ behaviour shows you are not a fully qualified teacher. Pupils know we are student teachers; it is difficult to manage them. Pupils feel and say both of us are learners (student teacher and pupils).*

Sixty three out of 243 (26%) participants also highlighted that there was lack of discipline among pupils in their relationship with student teachers. This view was expressed by 28 out of 116 student teachers who completed the questionnaires, 15 students in focus groups 7, 8, and 9, 15 out of 62 mentors and five out of 20 lecturers. In support of this, participants in focus group 7 also had the following to say:

*Pupils consider us as students – they say we are all learners. It is difficult to manage them. They do not listen. When mentor is away pupils misbehave.*

In support of this view one mentor and another student made the following statements respectively:

*M61 Children can be noisy and playful knowing student teachers spare the rod.*
Some pupils do not listen to student teachers because they are influenced by mentors.

When participants were asked to state some causes of pupil indiscipline in the pupil-student teacher relationship, the way schools introduced student teachers which led to some labeling was given as a cause of pupil indiscipline in their relationships with trainee teachers by 17 student teachers and eight mentors (10% out of 243 participants). Five student teachers opined that the disrespect the mentors displayed to student teachers was a cause of pupil indiscipline. Two mentors attributed pupil indiscipline to student teachers’ lack of good mastery of subject matter and the banning of the administration by teachers of corporal punishment in schools.

Failure by pupils to have curriculum materials was a challenge which 31 out of 243 (13%) participants expressed. Seventeen out of 116 student teachers who filled in the questionnaire and 14 participants in focus groups 5, 8 and 9 expressed the view that failure by pupils to have curriculum materials was a challenge student teachers faced when they were doing TP. In support of this view one student among those who filled in the questionnaire had the following statement to make:

S13 Pupils do not bring books, exercise books, pens and other curriculum materials.

This opinion was buttressed in focus groups 5, 8 and 9. In focus group 5 statements made by participants, which support this view are given below;

Some pupils spend a full week without bringing exercise books
Another added:

*Pupils bring no books no books, Shona, English, et cetera*

This view is in tandem with an already presented parent-related challenge, that parents were not co-operative enough to provide pupils with curriculum materials required for effective learning.

Poor pupil communication in English was viewed as a challenge which was faced by student teachers by 32 out of 243 (13%) participants among whom were 21 out of 116 students who filled in the questionnaire, eight out of 62 mentors and three out of 20 lecturers,. All the 21 students who expressed this opinion were pursuing the General Course in teacher education. Nonetheless, this issue was not raised in any of the focus groups, may be this could be attributed to the deliberate effort some schools, even those in rural areas, make to provide some good foundation necessary for the learning of English language. Some schools make it a point that sets of reading books like the Sunrise Readers are adequately supplied. Some of those who raised the challenge of pupils’ poor communication in English had the following to say:

*S114 English is really bad- can’t understand them*

*S37 Many can’t speak and write good English.*

Good and effective communication is necessary in teaching and learning situations. Without it teaching and learning cannot take place effectively. The finding which was made in this study that poor communication in English by pupils presented a challenge to student teachers was not made in any of the studies which the researcher reviewed in
Chapter Two. Some of the studies were conducted in countries in which English language was L1 to the learners.

Furthermore, 26 out of 116 students among those who completed the questionnaire conceived that they faced no pupil-related challenges when they were doing Teaching Practice. The difference in opinion could be attributed to factors such as the school administration, student teacher level of industriousness and mentor influence on pupils about status of student teachers.

4.4.7 Teaching practice documentation-related challenges

When student teachers do Teaching Practice, they are required to keep a portfolio or Teaching Practice File, which is a collection of student teachers’ Teaching Practice records. Portfolios give a holistic picture of work of the student and levels of documentation skills a student teacher has reached (Meena, 2009). This study sought to determine the forms of portfolio-related challenges student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice. Responses related to this endeavour were given by students’ responses to question 16, lecturer responses to question 13 and mentor responses to question 9 in the respective questionnaires and focus group guide.

Ninety-one out of 243 (37%) participants that is to say 63 out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire, 13 participants in focus groups, 14 mentors and one lecturer noted that inadequacy or lack of resources necessary for preparing TP documentation was a challenge student teachers faced while doing TP. Out of the group of students which responded to the questionnaire, 20 students highlighted that time was a constraint in the preparation and updating of Teaching Practice documents, 11 stated that they had no
syllabuses, eight gave the view that lack of modern technology was a challenge which negatively affected the preparation of Teaching Practice documents. In addition, the rest of student teachers out of these 63 pointed out either lack of teachers’ guides for some subjects, or textbooks or activity books for pupils. To buttress these opinions, some student teachers had the following statements to make:

S42 *Don’t get enough time, we have sports etc, a lot of marking, it is too much for 3rd years.*

S43 *Time is rather not enough to update all documents in time.*

S48 *There are limited books e.g. textbooks for references.*

S44 *Too much workload especially now we have three assignments to submit on one day, yet we still have to plan and update documents, let alone research in (sic) assignments (Term 5)*

Thirteen students participating in focus groups 3, 5 and 10 expressed similar opinions. In focus group 10, for example, one participant had the following to say:

*In preparing teaching documents there is a problem of inadequate references. There are no textbooks for Home Economics, Physical Education, Music and Art.*

Related to the challenge of lack of resources, one out of 62 mentors and one out of 20 lecturers each noted that student teachers failed to secure official syllabuses of the subjects they were teaching. Thirteen out of 62 mentors supported the view that students faced the challenge of time constraints in the preparation of documents. In support of this view, one mentor had the following to say:
Students face serious time constraints, they do not have adequate time to give justice to writing of docs (sic)

The challenge of time constraints confirms observations made by some external and internal examiners’ reports in Teaching Practice. According to one internal examiner’s report compiled 13/10/2013, scheming and planning were sketchy. Schemes and records were not up to date. According to one Teaching Practice report by external assessors “Remediation is limited to the Languages and Maths. Content and Practical subjects are not catered for.” When conducting document analysis the researcher came across several cases of remedial and extension records which had no evaluations. A constraint that can contribute to such issues is time. Of course other variables may contribute to such issues raised by internal and external assessors. When participants were asked to suggest causes of the challenge of lack of resources necessary in their preparation of Teaching Practice documentation, four out of 243 participants (2%) namely two lecturers and two mentors pointed out that school or Ministry failure to provide textbooks and other resources necessary for scheming and lesson planning was a cause related to lack of necessary materials for teaching preparation. Work overload from school and mentors was given as contributing to time constraint by 26 students out of 243 participants (11%) and too many demands by the college as a cause of time constraint was stated by 30 students out of 243 participants (12%). Some two participants had the following to say:

S12 College and school demands are many.

S34 There is pressure of assignments, modules to read- about sixteen of them. The 2-5-2 training is a haste (sic) one.
Lack of resources required for preparation of Teaching Practice documents affects the quality of student teachers’ work. One of the objectives of practicum in teacher education is to enable student teachers to effectively plan and prepare lessons (Akbar, 2002), but if there are resource-related hindrances this objective may not be met. With ample time and textbooks, fairly much better Teaching Practice documentation can be prepared.

One hundred and two out of 243 (42%) participants observed that student teachers’ lack of adequate knowledge or understanding necessary in the preparation and maintenance of Teaching Practice documents was a challenge student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice. This opinion was expressed by 54 out of 116 who completed the questionnaire, seventeen participants in focus groups 2, 5, 6 and 7, 15 lecturers and 16 mentors. Due to this challenge student teachers faced many difficulties in syllabus interpretation and in keeping some records. Eleven students simply stated that they faced a challenge in interpreting school syllabi while others went to specify that they could not break down topics in the syllabus and failed to provide neat lesson topics. Six students pointed out that they had difficulties in stating achievable objectives. The challenge of syllabus interpretation was also referred to by four participants in focus group 7 where participants pointed out that there was some difficulty in the formulation of weekly scheme objectives. In other focus groups the difficulties associated with syllabus interpretation were not mentioned. This could be attributed to the time students had spent doing Teaching Practice. Some students seemed to have less challenges, after spending some three or more semesters doing T.P. Probably school and college input via supervisions helped in minimising syllabus interpretation related challenges by student teachers. In support of the
view that student teachers’ lack of adequate knowledge in syllabus interpretation was a challenge student teachers faced, some student teachers had the following to say:

S74 *For the first term I could not scheme on my own.*

S38 *Breaking down topics in the syllabus is a challenge.*

Fifteen out of 20 lecturers mentioned that student teachers had difficulties in lesson planning. Out of the 20 lecturers five gave the opinion that student teachers had difficulties in breaking down content into teachable units, three stated that students displayed failure to differentiate aims from objectives while four lecturers opined that student teachers lacked baseline skill in stating SMART objectives and they explained that student teachers failed to provide clear links in documents. Some lecturers had the following statements to make:

L3 *They (student teachers) face the problem of linking plans e.g. link between schemes and lesson plans.*

L9 .......... *failure to link all relevant items of the lesson plans i.e. Topic, content, objectives, media, method and activities.*

While the researcher was conducting document analysis, the researcher came across some evidence in support of the view that student teachers did not display baseline skills in syllabus interpretation. For instance some lesson topics were very broad for example “*Exploitation and Pollution*” (a lesson topic given in Religious and Moral Studies lesson). The researcher came across numerous cases of objectives which were not smartly stated, For example: “*During the lesson pupils will gain greater understanding of ways which they*
can state their possessions with others (sic).” The researcher also came across poorly stated lesson steps, an example of which was the following:

Step 1: Let us subtract 45 from 100

A properly stated lesson step clearly states the teaching method/s to be employed, the teaching point and learner and teacher activity either using the infinitive mood or simple present indicative mood. The words given in the example above would do well as the actual words the teacher would say in an effort to cover a lesson step.

Kecik and Aydin (2011) in a study they conducted in Turkey established that one of the teacher educator linked challenges which student teachers faced was in determining clearly stated learning outcomes. This finding is consistent with one of the findings of this study in that student teachers had challenges in stating SMART lesson objectives.

In one external assessment report compiled in March 2014 the following observations were made which were indications that student teachers had challenges in interpreting syllabi, even in their final semester of Teaching Practice:

Most schemes of work lacked details especially content breakdown. Scheme aims were being simply transferred from syllabuses exactly as they were in the syllabus and further transferred to lesson plans. Methods and activities were exactly the same for both schemes and lesson plans.

In addition, in the same report by external assessors the following observations were made regarding difficulties associated with lesson planning:
Steps are sketchy with 3 or 4 words. They reflect on teacher-centered methods. Lesson objectives are generally not clear and specific. Most average performers had just one objective and in a few cases two objectives. Lesson evaluation lacked self-reflection by the student teacher. Most failures were blamed on learners.

In addition to these observations by external assessors, the researcher did not come across any lesson based on tests which were written by pupils yet there was evidence that student teachers were giving pupils tests to write quite often. The researcher also observed that lesson evaluations were often very brief for example “Zvakaitwa” (Meaning, Things were done). “The lesson was done. Children could say names, sex and age.” Such evaluations are not informative and reflective or diagnostic. If such difficulties continue up to even the last semester of TP student teachers will end their Teaching Practice having not fully achieved some objectives of Teaching Practice such as developing skills in the fundamental procedures and techniques (Akbar, 2002). Some difficulties in record keeping were also linked to the challenge of lack of adequate knowledge or understanding in Teaching Practice documentation, which student teachers faced. Related to this challenge, 12 out of 116 who completed the students’ questionnaire expressed the view that they had problems with providing details in the anecdotal record, five had difficulties in balancing the class attendance register and five had difficulties in maintaining extension and remedial records.

S47 I have problems in recording remedial activities.

S8 Failing to conduct remedial and extension work.

L80 Documents like anecdotal. What I write as unusual lecturers dispute as usual.
The issue regarding challenges associated with the anecdotal records was also expressed in focus groups 2, 5 and 6 in which ECD students were part of. In focus groups, views about difficulties associated with the anecdotal records were clearly elucidated as is evident in the following sentiments expressed in focus group 2:

*The anecdotal is supposed to record the unusual some unusual that are (sic) regarded by students; lectures say they are not unusual.*

*What is the unusual?*

*You can spend a week without the unusual.*

*We do not know exactly what the unusual is about.*

Overall comments on one student assessment by one internal assessor which the researcher analysed had the following comments in support of the observation that student teachers had problems with supplying information in the anecdotal record:

*The trainee teacher is making a good effort. Nonetheless, the anecdotal records lack the unusual. Crying after some unpleasant experience such as being mocked at is not unusual.*

Sixteen out of 62 mentors also gave the view that student teachers did not understand some documents. When conducting document analysis, the researcher came across several examples of recordings in anecdotal records which were not apt. One example was a cited incident which involved a child pushing others and the interpretation was that the child was a bully all the time. Pushing others if done by a child who is a bully all the time is obviously not unusual. The challenge of the lack of adequate knowledge necessary in
preparing and keeping Teaching Practice documents which manifested itself in student teachers facing difficulties in syllabus interpretation and maintaining other Teaching Practice records could be an indication that college input was inadequate and so student teachers went for Teaching Practice without much understanding of these skills. This implication was in agreement with some views by participants when they gave possible causes of their lack of adequate knowledge in the preparation and upkeep of Teaching Practice records. Some participants had the following statements to make:

S93 No idea how to write documents. There was not enough time to be taught how to write documents, makes my work difficult.

S33 It is a challenge because l did not understand some documents well... lack of understanding during lectures.

S69 Some (documents) are not taught well for example Social Record Book- l just write what l think is right.

S51 Not fully taught on syllabus interpretation.

S41 Misunderstanding of documents by students during Teaching Practice preparation.

S2 Did not learn about how to write and plan for a test- l just do without a plan.

For Teaching Practice to be effective, standardisation of syllabus interpretation and records keeping should be done fully by teacher education institutions to avoid chances of student teachers going for Teaching Practice with hazy ideas about these Teaching Practice Portfolio-related skills.
Another Teaching Practice challenge linked to preparation of teaching documents which 78 out of 243 (32%) participants noted was that the documents that they were supposed to keep were too numerous. Sixty–six out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire expressed the view that students schemed for the whole term and wrote at least three lesson plans daily and monitored records daily. In support of the view that the numbers of documents student teachers were expected to prepare and maintain were too numerous for comfort some participants had the following statements to make:

S13 *The documents are too many we leave some undone.*

S53 *Documents are too many especially the lesson plan-I end up not doing some plans and fail to do remedial work.*

S66 *I have double scheming and planning as well as multiple records for 0-3 category and ECD A at once.*

S73 *Documents are too many for me to do them well.*

S44 *Too much workload especially now we have three assignments to submit on one day, yet still have to plan three lessons a day and update documents, let alone research for the assignments.*

In support of these views, seven out of 62 mentors and five out of 20 lecturers gave the opinion that student teachers complained of too much TP documentation workload. In support of this, one participant had the following to say:

M41 *There is too much pressure causing one not to plan well.*
As the researcher was conducting document analysis, the researcher also observed that student teachers kept many records. For instance those specialising in ECD kept records such as the anecdotal, social and checklist folders some of which required lots of information. For instance, the checklist folder covered physical and language development of the child, pre-reading abilities, technology, computers and application abilities of the child interaction. The researcher also observed that student teachers in the General Course kept test records, remedial, extension, individual progress reports. In addition, the researcher also observed that student teachers wrote at least three lesson plans daily, although in some instances the researcher also observed that some students just wrote one or two lesson plans on some days. Some details in the Social Records had not been entered by 5 March, 2014 from the beginning of school term in January that year. It was quite evident that student teachers were involved in too much paper work, which as some students pointed out and as the researcher also observed, resulted in some work being done shoddily. For instance, some evaluations were very sketchy, there were gaps seen in the individual records and remedial and extension was done quite minimally as was stated in the Teaching Practice external examiner’s report. Remediation was only limited to languages and Mathematics. Content subjects were not catered for.

Teaching Practice documentation expectations which differed from one supervisor to another or by school and college was viewed as a challenge by 50 out of 243 (21%) participants. Eighteen out of 116 students, among those who completed the questionnaire stated this challenge. Some participants had the following statements to make in support of this opinion:
S83 One lecturer corrects on documentation and the other would come with another view. This bothers me, I end up doing what I think is right.

S63 There is changing of documents and presentation during the course of Teaching Practice.

S55 There are changes from assessor to assessor .......... how confusing?

Fourteen participants in focus groups 2, 6 and 8 buttressed the opinion that practicum supervisors had conflicting expectations. In focus group 2 one participant made the following view:

Some supervisors condemn adjustments but adjustments would have been made while at contact sessions.

In addition, in focus group 8 the following statement was made by one of the participants:

College expectations differ from mentors. Some require horizontal while others prefer vertical planning.

Fourteen out of 62 mentors and four out of 20 lecturers also gave the view that in the compilation of Teaching Practice documents, students got different instructions from college and from the school. The following statement by one participant reinforces this opinion:

M44 College and school have different expectations for example on scheme plans causing confusion and demotivation of student teachers.
Further support of the view that there was a challenge of varying expectations in the preparation of practicum documents was given in the Teaching Practice Report by external assessors of 2014 as follows:

*Reading records continue to present some challenges to student teachers. There are a lot of variations in terms of design, structure and frequency of monitoring of pupils’ progress.*

Problems of this nature could have contributed to the observation by some internal assessor and my observation that some students were not taking on board suggestions made by supervisors. If supervisors’ suggestions differ greatly, this might confuse students and so student teachers might just stick to their old ways of doing things, thereby stifling chances of any positive development while student teachers are doing Teaching Practice. According to the external examiners Teaching Practice report compiled in May 2014,

*The Teaching Practice file has lost its value....The benefits to the student teacher appear remote.*

The varying expectations between school and college staff supervisors’ expectations could imply that no supervision standardisation workshops were being held for college lecturers or for school-based supervisors by the college or else the workshops may not be as frequent as expected. The other implication could be that students got a short and inadequate stint before going for Teaching Practice. The findings by McGee (1996) Kourieos (2012) and Oppong (2013) that supervisor expectations and remarks of and by different supervisors were in conflict are in support of the finding made in this study that varying expectations between college and school staff’s supervisors expectations was one of the challenges student teachers faced in the compilation of TP documents.
Another TP portfolio - related challenge which 22 out of 243 (9%) participants gave was lack of assistance. Eight out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire mentioned this difficulty in relation to the lack of co-operation from mentor and school administration. Some of the students had the following to say:

*S79* *I fail to get proper attention in some cases from the mentor- I end up doing things as I see fit.*

*S30* *There is no co-operation from mentor and administration.*

Sixteen out of 62 mentors also gave the opinion that student teachers got minimal supervision of documents from mentors. This confirms what internal assessors observed on one of the trips to supervise and assess student teachers. The Teaching Practice internal report dated 13 March, 2014: gave a related report as follows:

*Generally students’ record books were not pleasing at all. It suggests that they lack local supervision.*

Such challenges could be attributed to school-based supervisors’ demotivation or may be students themselves may show untoward characteristics and the supposed school-based supervisor may decide not to help students with their documentation. In focus groups, the problem of school based supervisors not wanting to help in the preparation and upkeep of Teaching Practice documents was not mentioned at all. Such differences could be attributed to differences in levels of motivation and willingness to assist by mentors and school administration operating in different environments.
Six out of 243 (2%) participants, namely six out of 20 lecturers, gave the view that student teachers had the challenge of poor communication in preparing and maintaining Teaching Practice documents. Students had problems in using correct English grammar and spellings. The internal assessors’ reports which the researcher went through also gave the opinion that there were numerous grammatical and spelling errors in student teachers’ Teaching Practice portfolios. The researcher came across quite a number of grammatical and spelling errors in the schemes and lesson plans and even records such as the anecdotal which required students to give some details surrounding an unusual incident. Some examples that the researcher saw as the researcher analysed some documents are:

*STEP 2: Both teacher and pupils discuss about the goodness of forgiving one another.*

*STEP 5: Teacher asked pupils to give report backs from the groups.*

*EVALUATION: Some of the children could not state their age. There were timid.*

Communication related challenges could be attributed to the work overload students have when doing Teaching Practice and so time may be a constraint for them to do their work meticulously or it could be that some student teachers write bad English due to poor foundation in the acquisition of the English which is L2 to most student teachers. The Teaching Practice portfolio-related challenges which participants mentioned can easily lead to the education system not satisfactorily achieving some objectives of Teaching Practice, among which are: to enable the student teachers to effectively plan and prepare lessons and to provide an opportunity to student teachers to have their teaching evaluated and to gain from the benefits of criticism (Akbar, 2002).
4.4.8 Lesson delivery-related challenges

One of the objectives of Teaching Practice is to allow the student teacher to “experience reality, real schools, real teachers and real teaching” (Report of a Peer Learning Activity, 2010, p. 4). Real teaching covers several aspects, one of the key areas being delivery of a lesson or unit of instruction. The study sought to determine the forms of challenges student teachers faced in relation to the delivery of lessons. In line with this quest, the researcher sought student teacher responses to question 17, mentor responses to question 10 and lecturers’ responses to question 14. Lesson-delivery related challenges which participants expressed were summarised as in figure 4.5 and these were presented and analysed one by one.
Fig 4.6 Lesson delivery-related challenges

Ninety–seven out of 243 (40%) identified lack of baseline skills in lesson delivery or lack of the ability to teach well as a challenge student teachers faced when they were doing
Teaching Practice. Among these were 51 out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire. Difficulties associated with this challenge were quite numerous as expressed by the participants who expressed this view. Difficulties comprised failure to introduce lessons aptly, to develop lessons appropriately, to explain concepts convincingly, to employ methods of teaching befittingly, to use media to the purpose, failure to manage time by over-planning or under-planning, to conclude lessons properly and to manage pupils especially pupils of mixed ability and to control large classes. Such difficulties ultimately led to the failure to achieve lesson objectives. Student teacher’ lack of baseline skills in lesson delivery was also mentioned by 31 out of 62 mentors and six out of 20 lecturers and nine participants in focus groups 7 and 10. In addition, there was ample evidence of these difficulties in the Teaching Practice documents which the researcher analysed. Some of the supporting statements made by participants are as follows:

S100 I am not well versed with the topics being taught.

S112 Introductions are difficult for me to formulate.

S49 Lesson introductions can sometimes be irrelevant and be a bore to learners and they lose interest in the lesson.

S96 I fail to explain concepts well for example in Environmental Science on the topic Reproduction organs.

S56 Teacher-Pupil interaction is weak (3rd semester.)

S77 Mixing stages is a problem.

S78 Failing to meet lesson objectives is the problem
Using group or discussion is a problem.

I ask vague questions.

Over-planning—time frame of the lesson is too short for practical lessons.

In focus group 7, participants had the following to say:

In lessons, handling mixed ability learners is a problem. Rates of learning are difficult to satisfy.

Class management is a problem. Pupils make lots of noise.

Classes are too big, for example, there are 61 pupils in one grade one class.

In focus group 10, participants had the following views to express:

Some pupils need remedial work. There are slow learners, in writing and understanding concepts. It is difficult to deal with such. Teaching mixed ability groups is a problem. Sometimes we just leave out the slow—slow.

In relation to the student inability to display baseline skills when delivering lessons, some lecturers had the following to say:

Student teachers lack confidence in delivering lessons due to poor content mastery.

Inability to choose relevant introductions for lessons is an issue.

Some evidence the researcher obtained through document analysis supports the opinion that students faced an array of difficulties in delivering lessons. According to the internal
assessors’ T.P report of March, 2014, student teachers had the problem of using a single style of introductions. One single style of introduction the researcher came across as the researcher went through some Teaching Practice documents was:

*Pupils and teacher review the previous lesson*

In actual fact this cannot be regarded as a complete introduction since it does not make any pointers to the lesson of the day. Furthermore, the Teaching Practice report by the internal team also communicated the following:

*There was no effective use of prepared media, there was inability to explain concepts, failure to be sensitive to pupils’ needs by student teachers, inter alia.*

Obviously student teacher inability to apply baseline skills in lesson delivery was a big challenge. 55 out of 243 participants (23%) namely 15 mentors, five lecturers and 35 students attributed the inability by student teachers to apply baseline skills in lesson delivery to inadequacy in the preparation of student teachers in the area of delivery lessons. 19 out of 243 (8%) that is to say six mentors, two lecturers and 11 students opined that student teachers’ inability to apply baseline skills in lesson delivery was attributable to ineffective school-based and college based supervision. There could have been minimal school-based supervisions and as was discussed earlier in this chapter, some suggestions by supervisors were not taken on board by student teachers. Such issues can easily render practicum objectives unachievable and consequently the quality of student experiences when doing Teaching Practice can be compromised.

Lack or inadequacy of resources was conceived as a challenge in lesson delivery by 44 out of 243 (18%) participants. Resources that were reported as lacking or inadequate included;
time, textbooks, activity books and modern technology. Some authenticating statements that were made by participants are:

S48 ICT gadgets are not functional.

S49 Lack of books such as H.E compromises on my subject content. We cannot use any technology even power point, so my teaching remains traditional and cannot be innovative.

S114 There is unavailability of teachers’ resource books and activity for pupils.

S40 There are limited books such as textbooks for references.

S39 Lack of resources in subject areas like RME.

S98 Lack of resources especially in Science.

S3 Sometimes, time allocated for practical lessons is not enough e.g Environmental Science so I just rush through.

S72 Some equipment for outdoor activities is out-dated.

In focus groups 6, 7 and 8, 13 participants also noted that the lack of resources was a difficulty they faced in delivering lessons. Participants expressed the following sentiments:

There is the issue of textbooks, there are no textbooks for Physical Education, Home Economics and Agriculture and these subjects are not on the Timetable.

We may go for 2-3 weeks without required resources for you to deliver lessons effectively.
One goes around asking for chalk. We went for about 3 weeks without chalk—yet they want to improve.

Similar findings were reported by Kasanda (1995) who in his study carried out in Namibia found out that student teachers were of the opinion that lack of teaching materials such as equipment and syllabus and poor school facilities contributed to unsuccessful T.P.

Lack of resources necessary for effective lesson delivery could be attributed to the economic hardships prevailing in the country at the time the study was conducted, so some schools might not have afforded to provide textbooks, pupils’ activity books ICT gadgets and even basic materials necessary for the production of media such as charts. However, one participant in focus group 7 gave the following view:

The system of looking down upon practical subjects and that they are not examinable contributes to the shortage of materials in Practical subjects.

Another participant gave the following view on the probable cause of resource shortages:

S98 The change from the biased Religious Studies approach to Multi Faith Approach contributed to the shortage of textbooks in the teaching of the newly introduced subject (RME).

This shows that at times some curricular changes are implemented without adequate materials to support their success.

The challenge of pupils not understanding English, which is the language of instruction, was mentioned by 23 out of 243 (9%) among whom were 19 out of 116 students who
completed the questionnaire and four participants in focus group 7. Some authenticating statements made by some participants are:

S25 Many of the pupils do not understand English which causes me to use the mother language.

S47 At times even in an English lesson you will be forced to conduct it in pure Shona because most children are not familiar with the language.

S33 I have to use or integrate the mother tongue because of slow response due to communication barrier.

In focus group 7 participants buttressed the view that pupils had problems in understanding English as is illustrated in the following statements:

At grade 3, language is a problem- English is a problem when it comes to composition writing they cannot read English words, they cannot fish out answers from a passage.

When asked what the possible causes of the problem of failing to understand English were one participant in focus group 7 responded:

Different backgrounds……we might need money e.g. for Sunrise readers.

Eleven out of 243 (5%) participants expressed the view that pupils had problems in communicating in English because English was L2 to them while another four (2%) mentioned poor foundation in the learning of English as the cause of poor communication in English by pupils.
Twelve out of the 243 (5%) namely, four out of 20 lecturers and eight out of 62 mentors however observed that student teachers faced problems in using the language of instruction. This view is supported by statements given by some participants:

L6 *They (student teachers) fail to explain concepts fully and clearly and ask unclear questions.*

M42 *Some students perform badly in grammar so much that they can be corrected by pupils they teach, this embarrasses them.*

M45 *Some of them cannot speak English.*

Problems in using English as a language of instruction could be attributed to little reading in English while children are still young, be they student teachers or pupils which the student teachers were teaching.

Twenty–four out of 243 (10%) participants namely 12 out of 116 student teachers amidst those who completed the questionnaire, three out of 20 lecturers and nine out of 62 mentors expressed the opinion that lack of good subject mastery was a challenge student teachers faced in delivering lessons. The following statements given by the participants support the opinion that subject mastery or lack of teaching content was a challenge which student teachers faced:

S100 *I am not well versed with the topics I am teaching.*

L17 *Lack of confidence due to poor content mastery*

Seventeen out of 243 (7%) that is to say 10 students, two lecturers and five mentors among those who mentioned that student teachers lacked good subject mastery attributed this
challenge to lack of resources such as textbooks, libraries and internet. Heavy workload was given as a factor contributing to student teacher insufficient subject mastery by 13 out of 243 (5%) namely, seven students and four mentors and two lecturers among those participants who opined the challenge of lack of adequate subject mastery on the part of student teachers. One participant namely one mentor gave student teacher lack of industriousness as a factor contributing to student teacher lack of good subject mastery in the primary school subjects.

Pupil indiscipline was viewed by 28 out of 243 (12%) participants as a challenge student teachers faced in lesson presentation. Sixteen out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire, 12 participants in focus groups 5, 6, and 7, seven out of 62 mentors and three out of 20 lecturers gave the opinion that student teachers faced difficulties emanating from pupil indiscipline. Pupil indiscipline resulted in poor class control. Statements supporting this opinion were:

M61 *Children can be noisy and playful knowing that student teachers spare the rod.*

S43 *Sometimes the class is difficult to control especially in the case of grade first term where I am now.*

In focus group 6 participants made the following statements:

*Pupils know that this is our teacher, this one is a student teacher..... They say we can relax.*

*One cannot quieten them.*
One of the problems is pupil indiscipline. They know they are not beaten.

Peters (2012), Goh and Mathews (2011), Kasanda (1995) and Mapfumo et.al., (2012) in their studies conducted in Australia, Malaysia, Namibia and Zimbabwe, respectively, also established that lack of discipline among learners and learner behavioural problems posed challenges to student teachers.

When participants were asked to give the possible causes of pupil indiscipline during lesson delivery by student teachers, the mere knowledge that the student teachers were not fully qualified was given as a cause of pupil indiscipline by 15 out of 243 (6%) namely twelve students, two mentors and one lecturer among those who gave student teacher indiscipline as a challenge student teachers faced. The non administration of corporal punishment by student teachers and even the mentor was given as a cause of pupil indiscipline by 10 out of 243 (4%) that is to say, seven students, two mentors and one lecturer. Very large class sizes was given as a factor contributing to pupil indiscipline by 6 out of 243 (3%) namely four students and two mentors. Poor lesson delivery by student teachers was viewed as a cause of pupil indiscipline by three mentors out of 243 participants (1%).

The hot-seating situation obtaining at some schools was viewed by 20 out of 243 (8%) participants as a challenge which also posed some difficulties to student teachers when they were delivering lessons. This challenge was stated by 11 out of 116 students who filled in the questionnaire and by nine participants in focus groups 3 and 8. Due to the hot seating situation, student teachers did not do justice to content coverage as each school day
had two classes to use a classroom for learning. Some statements made by participants include the following:

S103 *There is harsh weather at times outside. Pupils do not pay attention for long.*  
*There are disturbances from locals and passersby.*

In focus group 8 participants had the following to say:

*The hot seating scenario is a problem. We try to cover content during off sessions which is not formalised.*

*But parents require their children to be at home, it becomes a problem to cover some content.*

The issue of hot seating was not expressed by lecturers and mentors. It is possible that some mentors had got so used to hot-seating and could not think of challenges it posed to student teachers. The fact that only a few participants expressed the opinion that hot-seating was posing some difficulties could mean that hot-seating was not operational at other schools during the time of study.

Twenty-two out of 243 (9%) participants highlighted stifling of student teacher efforts in lesson presentation by a mentor as a challenge which student teachers faced as they delivered lessons. These comprised 16 out of 116 student teachers who filled in the questionnaire and eight in focus groups 5 and 6. Mentors were reported to interrupt the flow of the lessons and to make interjections as the student teacher strove to present a lesson. Some participants had the following to say:
S44 Interruptions from the mentor, since they will be telling me what to say which makes me lose confidence in front of pupils.

S97 Mentor interjects in front of pupils for example “you have not said it right.”

In focus group 5 supporting sentiments were expressed as follows:

At college they keep on hammering on the use of peer and pair work.

Mentor says there is no time for group work.

In focus group 6 participants also buttressed the view that mentors stifled students’ efforts in lesson delivery. Supporting statements made by the participants were:

Mentor does not give me adequate time to practice. They feel I am spoiling pupils.

Some days they teach all subjects.

Five students out of the 243 (2%) participants ascribed such mentor stifling to general inadequacy of teaching time. Mentor inability to handle some issues professionally and mentor’s failure to supervise student teacher lesson plans before the student presented a lesson were some of the causes of stifling of student teachers’ efforts given by 11 of the 16 students (7%).

That only a few participants mentioned the restrictive and stifling of efforts by mentor in relation to student teachers’ lesson presentation could be ascribed to the fact that in earlier sections of the questionnaire student teachers had already stated mentor-related challenges they faced when they were doing Teaching Practice.
Only seven out of 116 (6%) students gave the opinion that they faced no challenges as far as lesson presentation was concerned. For instance one participant responded as follows:

S86 *None now but in the early terms, almost every phase was problematic.*

Such a statement could imply that acquisition of teaching skills by student teachers could be developmental and with the right type of assistance, negative aspects student teachers display in the initial stages of Teaching Practice can be minimised. That very few students indicated that they faced no challenges in delivering lessons, might be linked to the fact that lesson delivery is one of the most critical activities of any one in the teaching field, operating at whatever level. Analysis of the internal and external examiners reports revealed more weaknesses in lesson delivery by student teachers than other aspects of Teaching Practice, since they reported on all aspects of lesson delivery such as uncaptivating introductions, lack of student teacher confidence, bad questioning skills, ineffective use of media, little variety in media use, failure to marry real life experiences with theory, use of chalkboard remaining a challenge, inter alia.

The forms of lesson delivery challenges which participants stated were both college and also school-related. This could be an indication that college and school-collaboration in preparing and assisting teacher trainees in the area of lesson delivery was not effective.

4.4.9 Information communication technology related challenges

The study was conducted at a time when there was much technological advancement and this in turn influenced some activities in education. In educational circles, there is remarkable use of modern technology which in a way assists in making teaching and learning easy. In response to question 18 which required student teachers to give their
opinions on the forms of ICT-related challenges, student teachers faced while on teaching practice 51 out of 161 (32%) students, gave the opinion that the lack of ICT gadgets was one of the challenges they faced. In some instances, participants expressed absence of ICT gadgets while in others they expressed the view that while some gadgets or services were available, student teachers did not have access to those facilities. Power cuts were pointed out by four out of 116 students as hindrance to their access to internet services. The following statements bear testimony to these views:

S24 There is no incorporation of technology in teaching children.

S50 No opportunity to use modern technology, just chalkboard.

S1 There is a lack of internet for personal notes and assignments.

S24 None, no computer, no video games for children.

S63 No ICT gadgets.

S48 ICT gadgets are not functional.

S21 We do not use any computers.

S64 No continuous Zesa (Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority) supply.

In focus group 2, five participants pointed out that there was an internet facility at the school where they were attached but one participant had the following to say:

When we do assignments, we cannot access the internet facility despite that (sic) there is an internet facility at the school.
Limited use of modern technology while student teachers were doing Teaching Practice was ascribed by participants to the absence of gadgets as a result of failure to purchase them because of financial challenge or lack of necessary skills to use programmes/software such as power point even if some gadgets may be available or just the influence of outdated traditions.

Lecturer computer phobia or limited use of technology to the advantage of student teachers was highlighted by 16 out of 161 (10%) students as a challenge the student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice. There was no technological integration by lecturers. According to the participants lecturers were not able to e-mark assignments or projects. Some participants had the following statements to make in support of the view that there were signs of being computer phobic or computer illiterate in some respects on the part of lecturers:

S24 Lecturers do not e-mark our assignments.

S28 I travel a lot to college, yet I could just e-mail assignments or send CDs.

S86 Lecturers are not comfortable to e-mark our assignments.

When participants were asked to give their opinions on causes of such difficulties, seven students out of 243 (3%) participants attributed the failure by lecturers to e-mark student teacher projects and assignments to the problem of tradition. Some people do resist technological changes and prefer to do things in the traditional way. These views were not expressed by participants in the focus groups or even by lecturers. Silence on such issues may imply contentment with the old ways of doing things or lack of knowledge of benefits that people could derive from the effective use of facilities like the internet.
In addition, 19 out of 243 (8%) participants, among whom were 14 out of 116 students who filled the questionnaire and five students in focus group 3, gave the view that the lack of skills to use modern technology for teaching purposes was an ICT-related challenge they faced. Some of the supporting statements are:

S86 *I can’t use a computer to teach.*

S49 *Can’t use any modern technology even power point.*

In focus group 3, participants also had the following sentiments:

*At times we are being asked to teach computers, yet at college student teachers are just taught basics.*

*Most of us are novices in using computers.*

*Some pupils might be more computer literature than us students.*

Such difficulties were assigned to the probable limit in the ICT college syllabus, which focuses more on helping student teachers to gain basic skills in using the computers such as those of operating a computer using MS Word, printing and surfing the internet rather than equipping student teachers with skills of using computers to teach pupils while they will be on Teaching Practice. This opinion supports a statement made by one of the participants which is as follows:

L13 *At our college students are taught ICT skills for their enrichment, not for application in the classroom.*
Since time is a constraint and student teachers just spend two terms before they go for Teaching Practice, the ICT department is most likely to fail to equip student teachers with basic relevant skills to use computers to teach pupils. The finding made in this study that student teachers faced the challenge of not being able to use modern technologies in their teaching concurs with Desai (2012) who established that teacher education centres and curriculum offered in teacher education in India had very little focus on new trends in education and the need to incorporate new technology was an aspect trainees felt was not covered in their teacher education curriculum.

The forms of ICT related challenges mentioned by student teachers are in some ways college-related and in other ways school-based.

4.4.10 Other teaching practice-related challenges

Just to be sure to get all information on Teaching Practice-related challenges, an open question was asked in the questionnaire requiring participants to state any other Teaching Practice related challenges. In the lecturers’ questionnaire, question 8 required lecturers to state any other challenge which student teachers faced when doing TP. Question 11 in the mentors’ questionnaire and question 19 in the student teachers’ questionnaire addressed the same. In response to this question, 89 out of 243 (37%) participants gave the viewpoint that heavy workload was a challenge student teachers encountered while they were doing Teaching Practice. Among these, forty-42 out of 116 of the students who completed the questionnaire and 18 participants in focus groups 5, 6, 8 and 10, highlighted heavy workload as a challenge they faced while they were doing Teaching Practice. Twenty five out of 62 mentors were also of the opinion that the workload of the student teachers was
heavy for the students. Only four out of 20 lecturers expressed this view. Simultaneously managing time for teaching and doing extra work given by mentors and other school staff and studying seemed to contribute to the work overload the student had, thus rendering the heavy work load issue both school and college-based. Some statements made by participants on the issue of work overload are as follows:

S49 Heavy work load- this affects quality.

S50 The issue of planning four lessons (a day) for ECD pupils which normally have two directed lessons.

S17 Assignments which would be handed in twice a week or weekly.

S44 The mentors and the school staff leave most of the work to student teachers, sometimes without orientation of what needs to be done.

S13 Too many assignments make us stressed up.

S41 The 2-5-2 programme is very stressful as the demands of assignments whilst on T.P are high.

In focus groups 5 and 10 participants expressed the view that workload increased as the duration on Teaching Practice lengthened. For instance, student teachers are expected to plan for two lessons in the initial terms of practicum, then they are expected to produce three lesson plans from the third term of Teaching Practice and in the third year of Teaching Practice they are expected to write four lesson plans a day. Assignment overload was also said to increase as the duration of Teaching Practice also increased so much that in the third year students were supposed to write five assignments per term. In focus group
6, when participants were requested to comment about the 2-5-2 programme, the following statements were made:

It is difficult to comment about it.

There is a lot of work but more money.

There is more work; doing much work in distance education.

The T.P programme is good in terms of monetary value, but workload is heavy.

In focus group 2 those opinions were reiterated by participants who made the following statements:

Workload- is too much.

We have to plan, write personal notes and do assignments.

One mentor made the following supporting statement:

Students have too many assignments by college. Students have too many things on their table why add assignment (sic).

In focus group 7, a different opinion was expressed by participants concerning TP related workload. According to one of the participants in this focus group;

Workload is manageable. We are meeting deadlines.

Such differences in opinion may be attributed to different personalities of participants. With some individuals even if workload is very heavy they just soldier on without making much noise about it. It would seem as if some participants in this group were overjoyed
about the practicum allowance they received and this overrode their concern about work load. A statement by one of the participants in this group supports this:

*Remember when we were at college, no money was coming in our pockets.*

Quite a reasonable number of students (60) and mentors (25) and only four lecturers gave the opinion that heavy work load was a challenge student teachers faced when doing Teaching Practice. That only a few lecturers expressed this opinion could be linked to the thinking that student teachers do not raise lecturers’ awareness of the issue, or just that lecturers regard the TP related workload given by the teacher education colleges as normal and manageable. The finding made in this study that student teachers faced the challenge of work overload supports a finding by Mapfumo et.al., (2012) who in their study found out that student teachers’ main source of stress was workload. While Mapfumo et.al., (2012) found out that student teachers’ main source of stress was workload which had a bearing on the teacher education institutions, the finding of this study was that the challenge of heavy workload which student teachers faced also emanated from the mentors and the school administration. However, too heavy a workload may easily compromise the attaining of some objectives of teaching practice especially those linked to planning and self-reflection. Student teachers may fail to efficiently “begin a career long habit of experimentation and reflection to discover what works or does not work for them and learners and why,” (Report of a Peer Learning Activity, 2009:4).

Routine visits to college by student teachers was a challenge which was conceived by 36 out of 243 (15%) participants among whom were 20 out of 116 students who completed
the open-ended questionnaire, three out of 20 lecturers and 13 out of 62 mentors. Some of the participants had the following statements to make in support of this opinion:

S28 I travel a lot to college yet I could just e-mail assignments or CDS.

M48 Travelling back and forth to for CDS is a problem.

M61 They (student teachers) always ask or write to get permission to leave the premises.

Three of the 20 students highlighted that there was a long distance between the schools at which they were attached for Teaching Practice and the teacher education institution. Travelling for long distances can easily tire STs and contribute to STs losing some precious time necessary for the execution of TP related tasks such as marking of pupils’ work and evaluating their teaching. Consequently, STs may fail to mark and evaluate timeously and conscientiously. However, routine visits to college by student teachers, which are expensive in terms of time and travelling costs, is a teacher education institution related challenge.

Accommodation problems were another challenge which 30 out of 243 (12%) participants viewed as being faced by some student teachers. Eight out of 116 students among those who filled in the questionnaire, two out of 20 lecturers, eleven out of 62 mentors and nine participants in focus groups 1 and 4 expressed the opinion that accommodation presented some challenges to student teachers who were doing Teaching Practice. In some two towns where participants in focus groups 1 and 4 stayed during TP, accommodation was said to be expensive. One participant in focus group 1 had the following to say:
Accommodation is expensive here. We have travel expenses to and from work where we got accommodation (sic).

In addition, some participants who filled in the questionnaire made the following remarks:

S34 Accommodation is very dear in the area.

S51 There is a lack of proper accommodation.

S82 Accommodation- high rentals is the issue.

The challenge of expensive and proper accommodation may be seen to be partly college-related if college fails to attach student teachers at schools where accommodation may be found or where they can get reasonable accommodation. However, students usually have a final decision regarding where they prefer to stay when doing Teaching Practice. Expensive accommodation may force STs to live in squalid conditions which are cheap. Living in squalid conditions may compromise student teacher level of confidence and motivation. Such a situation may cause STs to under-perform and this eventually contributes to rendering TP unproductive in one way or another. Fairly few participants were of the view that accommodation-related issues were a challenge student teachers faced while on Teaching Practice. This may be due to the fact that at some schools, student teachers were offered accommodation and that in some instances student teachers did Teaching Practice in their home area or city area so they were accommodated at home and this way, they might not have been affected by issues related to accommodation during their Teaching Practice.
Five out of 243 (2%), that is to say three out of 20 lecturers and two students gave the opinion that male ECD student teachers faced some rejection when deployed in preschools. One of the lecturers and one of the students had the following to say:

*L3 ECD students especially male ones face rejection when deployed in preschools, male students are not welcome in schools.*

*S80 My male partner is mistrusted.*

Among the students who completed the questionnaire, eight out of 116 (7%) student teachers did not give any response to the question which required them to state any other Teaching Practice challenges they faced while they were doing Teaching Practice. Some of the participants referred me to their responses to other questions on Teaching Practice challenges which student teachers faced, which probably is an indication that the questionnaire had exhausted most avenues of challenges that student teachers suffered while they were doing Teaching Practice.

**4.4.11 Causes of challenges faced by student teachers when doing teaching practice**

**4.4.11.1 Causes of challenges in applying didactic theories**

Under section 4.4 the forms of challenges which student teachers faced in trying to apply the didactic theories they learnt prior Teaching Practice were given. Among them were; lack of or shortage of resources needed for effective application of the theories and inhibition because of lack of confidence to apply the theories. Twenty-eight out of 243 participants (12%) reported that resources were in short supply and this challenge was attributed to harsh economic conditions still obtaining in Zimbabwe at the time the study
was conducted by. Some participants made the following statements to buttress this opinion:

S12 *Times we are going through as a nation are hard.*

S48 *Money to buy resources to effect application of theories is not easy to come by*

Lack of student teacher confidence to apply didactic theories was attributed to the difficult nature of the theories and lack of skills necessary to apply didactic theories. Twelve participants attributed this challenge to inadequate exposure/practice at college due to the short stint at college. In support of this, one participant had the following to say:

S45 *The 2-5-2 program makes it sometimes difficult for us students to get enough of the theory, therefore we only apply the little that we were taught and understood.*

### 4.4.11.2 Causes of mentor-related challenges

Mentor linked challenges were presented under 4.4.2. When participants were asked to give their opinion on the forms of challenges they faced with the mentors, 58 out of 243 participants (24%) expressed the opinion that mentors overloaded student teachers with work. This view was expressed by 25 out of the 116 students who filled in the questionnaire and 33 mentors. In response to question 13 (ii) in the students’ questionnaire which sought participants’ views on the factors contributing to student work overload by mentors, 21 out of 116 students (34%) pointed out mentor laziness as a cause of heavy work load given to students by mentors, while 12 out of 116 (10%) expressed the view that the roles of mentor and mentee were not crystal clear.

In support of this some students had the following statements to make:
Fifty-nine out of 243 (24%) participants expressed the opinion that student teacher effort and creativity were stifled by some mentors. In response to a question which required participants to provide some possible factors contributing to the stifling of student teacher effort and creativity by mentors, 11 mentors and seven students (9% of the participants) observed that mentors were obsessed with teaching pupils for purposes of passing exams. According to one mentor and two lecturers there was lack of mentor orientation by the college. Six students (3%) gave the view that due to hot seating there was a time limit, while five others (2%) gave the view that some mentors qualified as teachers long back and were not quite well-versed with issues being emphasised at teacher education colleges like the thematic approach which is used in planning and teaching.

In support of these views, the following statements were given by participants;

S68 Mentor has no idea about the thematic approach.

S29 They think they are immune to change.

S107 Mentor feels student teacher is a threat to their old ways of doing things.

According to 29 participants out of 243 (12%) another mentor-related challenge which student teachers faced was being denied the opportunity to teach some subjects in the school curriculum and consequently students were not given enough practice to deliver lessons. Twenty out of 243 (8%) participants mentioned being denied the chance to teach Main and Practical subjects by mentors as a challenge they encountered and attributed this
to the pass rate emphasis in the education system in primary school curriculum viz: English, Maths, General Paper and Shona/Ndebele. Some participants expressed their views on the causes of student teachers being denied opportunity to teach main and practical subjects as follows:

S44 They (mentors) think that when you are a student teacher you know nothing and so restrict students’ teaching of subjects. Mentors are concerned about pupils excelling in exams.

S49 There is time constraints yet mentor has too much concern about class results.

S107 Mentors lack of orientation by college on the need to give student teachers adequate exposure to teach main subjects.

S9 Mentors consider practical subjects non-examinable.

L7 Some mentors are focused on the exams and this leads to the neglect of some subjects e.g. P.E.

Thirty-seven out of 243 (15%) participants gave the opinion that mentor lack of motivation was a challenge student teachers faced when doing TP. Among the possible causes of this challenge, three lecturers and 10 mentors (6%) mentioned the absence of mentor allowance. One lecturer had the following statement to make:

L6 Mentors are not incentivised.

L11 Low morale due to poor salaries and lack of mentoring incentives

M25 Mentors not keen to carry out mentoring duties, they are not incentivised.
Thirty-nine out of 243 (16%) expressed the view point that mentor negative personality was a challenge student teachers faced. When participants were asked to give causes of this form of challenge that student teachers were facing, lack of desirable mentoring skills was a cause given by 13 out of 243 (6%) of the participants namely eleven mentors and two lecturers. Nine students (4%) highlighted that mentors’ too much concern about good class test or exam results was the other cause of the mentors’ untoward mentality.

Mentor absenteeism was a challenge which 24 out of 243 (10%) participants expressed. Ten out of 243 (4%) participants attributed this problem to treble roles some teachers were performing, namely being class teacher, mentor and member of the school administration, while 6 participants (3%) attributed the challenge of mentor absenteeism to mentor having obtained some form of leave and five participants stated laziness of mentor as a cause of mentor absenteeism. In support of these views some participants made the following statements:

*S75 My mentor is bogged down with administrative work.*

*L1 Student teachers face the challenge of having no mentor when one dies, goes on leave or falls ill.*

Mentor lack of knowledge was another challenge which 53 out of 23 (22%) participants pointed out was being faced by student teachers. Twenty seven out of 223 (12%) attributed this challenge to the lack of mentor education in ECD. 7 out of 243 (3%) participants gave the reason that some mentors were not well-versed with supervision procedures. Some participants made the following statements:
Mentor does not have adequate knowledge, she just tells me to read or consult at college.

ECD mentors in private centres may be untrained.

The findings made in this study that lack of adequate knowledge and lack of mentor incentives were some of the causes of mentor-related challenges corroborate Chakanyuka et al., (2000) and Allen (2002) who established that challenges to effective monitoring hinged on: inadequate mentor training, bad mentor selection, low mentor motivation and inability to practise mentoring ethics.

4.4.11.3. Causes of TP supervision related challenges

T.P. supervision related challenges were discussed under 4.4.3. Question 14 (ii) on the student teacher questionnaire, questions 8(ii) and 14(ii) on the mentor questionnaire and question 11(ii) and 17 on the lecturer questionnaire were posed to obtain participants’ views on the causes of the challenges students faced while they were doing TP. Questions 14(ii), 8(ii) and 11(ii) were specific to the causes of supervision challenges. Questions 14 and 17 requested participants to give additional causes of TP related challenges. The lack of adequate ECD knowledge by Teaching Practice supervisors was given as one of the challenges student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice by 64 out of 243 (26%) participants. The lack of adequate ECD knowledge by supervisors both from training institution and host schools was a challenge students faced while doing TP. General course lecturers, some mentors and members in the school administration lacked adequate knowledge in ECD matters and so they ended up rendering little help and even giving wrong information to ECD student teachers. Thirty-nine students, nine mentors and
five lecturers gave the recent introduction of ECD training programme as the contributing factor to this challenge. Thus, 53 out of the 243 (22%) expressed this view. The other reason given by 11 out of 243 (5%) participants, namely four lecturers and seven mentors, was that lecturer supervision was not confined to lecturers’ areas of specialisation. That ECD was still fairly new and most lecturers had not been ECD teachers before was given as a cause of little supervisor knowledge by 25 out of 243 (10%), namely five lecturers, ten mentors and ten students.

In support of these views participants gave the following sentiments:

M38 *There is a shortage of ECD trained teachers in schools.*

M34 *Student teacher is better in knowledge than mentor.*

L24 *College supervisor criteria is not right, any lecturer can supervise any student.*

S48 *General course lecturers misguide, they know little about ECD.*

Forty-eight out of 243 (20%) participants expressed the opinion that conflict of requirements by Teaching Practice supervisors was a challenge which student teachers faced when doing practicum. Differing expectations by Teaching Practice supervisors was a challenge which student teachers faced not only in relation to ECD but also in the General course especially with regards to TP Portfolio. Supervisors made different suggestions on record keeping, scheming and even lesson planning. When participants were asked to state possible causes of forms of contradiction presented by Teaching Practice supervision, lack of appropriate lecturers’ and teachers’ knowledge in students’ areas of specialisation was given as a cause by 10 students, two lecturers and four mentors.
making together 16 out of 243 (7%). Lack of mentor induction by college was a cause given by two mentors and two lecturers (2%) and the assumption that every supervisor knows was a reason given by one lecturer. In support of this view, some participants had the following to say:

L17 Some areas of specialisation e.g. ECD need specialised close guidance but this is not practically possible on the ground as any lecturer is out on supervision to supervise any student.

M50 Mentors do it their own way, they are not inducted.

Assessor bias or unfairness was a challenge 45 out of 243 (19%) participants stated. Marks were not given fairly due to too high expectations of assessor and gender bias. On causes of this challenge, some participants gave the following viewpoints:

S99 Sometimes supervisors are too harsh and they sometimes have no time to listen to students’ explanations and they expect beyond students’ capacity.

S49 Female lecturers favour males and vice versa.

Forty eight out of 243 (20%) participants gave the opinion that the untimely nature of Teaching Practice supervision visits presented challenges to student teachers. Sometimes supervisions and assessments by college were made too early in a given school term before students had settled down or were delayed, such that some students could go for more than a term before they are supervised. The untimeliness of TP supervisions by college and some school administration was attributed to the large numbers of student teachers supervisors were handling by 17 out of 243 participants. Untimeliness of TP supervisions
was attributed to time constraints by nine out of 243 participants. Lack of school-based supervisors was given as a cause of untimely supervisions by two out of 243 participants. Some statements by participants supporting these views are:

S33 There was lack of assessment when the TIC went on retirement.

S46 At times you ask them to supervise they do not respond until the last minute.

S5 Assessors will be hurrying to finish the supervision in a short time, hence affecting students in the field.

4.4.11.4 Causes of administration related TP challenges

Being overloaded with school activities by school administration was a challenge which 39 out of 243 (16%) participants gave. The reasons assigned to the challenge of work overload given to student teachers by the school administration as expressed by five out of 243 participants was the absence of qualified teachers at some schools. Eleven out of the 243 gave the view that school heads just expected students to work extra hard while on TP. Three participants stated that the reason for heads of schools to give student teachers heavy workloads was to give students a good feel of all aspects related to teaching. Some participants had the following to say in support of these views:

S 44 Heads want students to develop wholesomely, not just in the classroom but in all other aspects of teaching.

S51 Administration expects too much from students.

Forty one out of 243 (17%) participants noted that school administration failed to provide students with materials necessary for effective teaching and learning. School
administration presented some challenge to student teachers by failing to supply them with relevant curriculum materials such as materials with which to make instructional media, textbooks, teachers’ resource books and even primary school syllabi. Twenty-seven out of 243 (11%) participants attributed this challenge to the general lack of funds by schools to buy and supply the needed curriculum materials.

Despising of student teachers by school administration was another challenge which student teachers faced and this view was expressed by 22 out of 243 (9%) participants who noted that school administration was not supportive. In the eyes of some school administration, student teachers were inferior and their role as teachers was not appreciated even if the student teacher would have worked as a relief teacher for some time. This form of challenge was attributed to the view generally held by most practitioners in the teaching field that student teachers are “green” and thus not placed at par with qualified teachers. Seven out of 243 participants expressed this view. One participant gave the following statement,

M60 No matter what, student teacher is regarded less of a teacher and thus they are looked down upon.

S28 They are sort of scornful because of our low level of learning.

4.4.11.5 Causes of parent/guardian related challenges

Under 4 4.7 the forms of challenges student teachers faced from parents or guardians were presented. Seventy-three out of 243 (30%) participants expressed the opinion that parents and guardians of pupils did not cooperate with student teachers. Five mentors and 21 students (11% of the 243 participants) pointed out that time constraint was a contributing
factor to the non-participation in community based projects by parents/guardians as many ECD parents/guardians belong to the working class. Another cause given by three mentors (1% of the 243 participants) was parent ignorance on the importance of school organised ECD community based projects. According to participants in focus group 6, parents did not participate in ECD community projects because parents belong to the working class and could not attend community projects which were run on Fridays and the following statements were made by participants in this focus group to buttress these opinions:

*Time is limited, Friday afternoons they do not come.*

*We just think about them (community based projects) and complete reports.*

Forty-nine out of 243 (20%) participants expressed the view that parents and guardians regarded students lowly. Parents did not have confidence and trust in the student teachers. The cause of the low regard of student teachers was attributed, by 26 out of 243 participants, to the fact that student teachers were still teachers-in-the-making. In support of this, one participant had the following to say:

*S10 Parents do not have respect for me as they regard me as being unqualified.*

*S102 There is no trust, they think you are not good enough.*

*L17 ECD parents/guardians do not trust ECD student teachers*

Thirty-nine out of 243 (16%) participants gave the opinion that another challenge which parents or guardians presented in the operations of student teachers was parent or guardian lack of knowledge of some aspects in the field of specialisation of the student teacher. The challenge that parents or guardians were not knowledgeable about ECD and its
requirements was attributed to the fairly recent formalisation of ECD in schools. Fifteen participants (6% of 243), namely four lecturers in their responses to question 13 which requested to state barriers to effective TP and eleven students expressed this view. In relation to this view one participant made the following statement:

\[ L4 \text{ Parents are not versed with trends and demands in ECD.} \]

\[ S69 \text{ They do not understand ECD requirements.} \]

\[ S65 \text{ Parents compare with other unregistered pre-schools that do not know government policies. They want ECD children to be taught writing.} \]

**4.4.11.6 Causes of pupil related challenges**

That pupils regarded student teachers lowly was a challenge that 66 out of 243 (27%) participants expressed. When participants were asked to state some causes of pupil indiscipline in the pupil-student teacher relationship, the way schools introduced student teachers, which led to some labelling, was given as a cause of pupil indiscipline in their relationships with trainee teachers by seventeen student teachers and eight mentors (10% out of 243 participants). Five student teachers opined that the disrespect the mentors displayed to student teachers was a cause of pupil indiscipline. Two mentors attributed pupil indiscipline to student teachers’ lack of good mastery of subject matter and the banning of the administration, by teachers, of corporal punishment in schools.

Poor pupil communication in English was viewed by 32 out of 243 (13%) participants as a challenge. Twelve out of 243(5%) participants attributed this problem to the Language of instruction policy, which states that instruction should be offered in English in schools yet
English is L2 to the majority of pupils in the primary school. However, the reason directly contributing to the challenge of poor communication in English was given as the lack of sound foundation in the learning of English. This was expressed by 16 out of 243 (7%) participants. Some of the participants made the following statements:

M40 Bad English- There are no sunrise set books.

L12 English is not mother language to most learners

4.4.11.7 Causes of teaching practice documentation related challenges

The forms of TP documentation related challenges which student teachers faced when doing Teaching Practice were presented under 4.4.9. Inadequacy or lack of resources necessary for the preparation of practicum documents was a challenge faced by students. Ninety-one out of 243 (37%) participants, that is to say 63 out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire, 13 participants in focus groups, 14 mentors and one lecturer noted that inadequacy or lack of resources necessary for preparing TP documentation was a challenge STs faced. Twenty one out of 243 participants assigned this challenge to the failure by school or relevant Ministry to provide curricular materials that facilitate efficient preparation for teaching. Accordingly, one participant had the following to say:

S144 There is unavailability of teachers’ resource books which the school or Ministry does not provide.

One hundred and two out of 243 (42%) participants expressed the view that student teachers’ lack of adequate knowledge or understanding necessary in the preparation and maintenance of Teaching Practice documents was a challenge student teachers faced when
they were doing Teaching Practice. This challenge was assigned to the training institution by 87 out of 243 (36%) participants. When asked to give causes of the lack of baseline skills in lesson delivery by student teachers, some participants had the following statements to make:

L8 Lack of adequate preparation because of 2-5-2 programme.

L1 Previously poor preparation while at college- lack of examples/ models to follow.

L1 Practically it is found wanting, unless there is ample time for it.

L11 More practice is needed but is inadequate due to 2.5.2 model.

L1 Practically it is found wanting, unless there is ample time for it.

L11 More practice is needed but is inadequate due to 2.5.2 model.

S4 The pre – TP teaching education lacked a lot on the ground.

S86 No. I did not get the chance to re-teach in micro and peer teaching sessions. Some concepts remained unclear. It was hurried.

S49 There were unclear areas especially on evaluation.

S64 I did not grasp documents. TP preparation was hurried.

Another Teaching Practice challenge linked to preparation of teaching documents which 78 out of 243 (32%) participants mentioned was that the documents that they were supposed to keep were too numerous. Fifty–one out of 243 (21%) participants attributed this
challenge to teacher education colleges’ requirements. Some participants had the following sentiments to express:

L4 College policies stipulate the requirements.

S22 College makes the stipulations what can one really do?

Teaching Practice documentation expectations which differed from one supervisor to another or by school and college was viewed by 50 out of 243 (21%) participants. Participants attributed this challenge to absence of mentor and lecturer orientation by training institutions.

Six out of 243 (2%) participants, namely six out of 20 lecturers mentioned that student teachers had the challenge of poor communication in preparing and maintaining Teaching Practice documents. This challenge was attributed to English being L2 to student teachers.

Student teachers’ poor subject mastery was attributed to lack of resources such as textbooks and access to internet service. In support of this, the following sentiments were made;

S71 No textbooks for reference.

S89 Researches must be done but we are not allowed to use the computer lab at our school.

4.4.11.8 Causes of lesson delivery linked challenges

Challenges which student teachers faced in delivering lessons were presented under 4.4.8. Ninety-seven out of 243 (40%) gave the view that lack of baseline skills in lesson delivery
or lack of the ability to teach well was a challenge student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice. Fifty-five out of 243 participants (23%) namely 15 mentors, five lecturers and 35 students attributed the inability by student teachers to apply baseline skills in lesson delivery to inadequacy in the preparation of student teachers in the area of delivery lessons. Nineteen out of 243 (8%), that is to say six mentors, two lecturers and 11 students highlighted that student teachers’ inability to apply baseline skills in lesson delivery was attributable to ineffective school-based and college-based supervision. In support of these views some participants made the following statements:

*L8 Lack of adequate preparation because of 2-5-2 programme.*

*S4 The pre – T.P. teaching education lacked a lot on the ground.*

Lack of or insufficient supply of materials to facilitate the application of the theories of education student teachers had learnt at college was linked to the economic hardships the generality of Zimbabwe was facing at the time the study was conducted by 28 out of 243 (12%) participants. Participants also assigned this challenge to way specific subjects were regarded in the school curriculum and fairly recent change in the school curriculum. One participant in focus group 6 had the following to say:

*The system of looking down upon practical subjects and that they are not examinable contributes to the shortage of materials in Practical subjects.*

Another participant gave the following view on the probable cause of resource shortages:

*S98 The change from biased Religious Studies to Multi Faith Approach contributed to the shortage of textbooks in the teaching of the newly introduced subject (RME).*
The challenge of pupils not understanding English, which is the language of instruction, was noted by 23 out of 243 (9%). Eleven out of 243 (5%) participants expressed the view that pupils had problems in communicating in English because English was L2 to them while another four (2%) opined poor foundation in the learning of English as the cause of poor communication by pupils in English. Twelve out of the 243 (5%) namely, four out of 20 lecturers and eight out of 62 mentors however expressed the view that student teachers faced problems in using the language of instruction. This view is supported by statements given by some participants:

L6 They (student teachers) fail to explain concepts fully and clearly and ask unclear questions.

M42 Some students perform badly in grammar so much that they can be corrected by pupils they teach, this embarrasses them.

M45 Some of them cannot speak English.

Problems in using English as a language of instruction could be attributed to little reading in English while children are still young, be they student teachers or pupils which the student teachers were teaching. This finding on the challenge of using English language as a language of instruction was not made in any of the studies reviewed by the researcher.

Twenty–four out of 243 (10%) participants expressed the opinion that lack of good subject mastery was a challenge student teachers faced in delivering lessons. Amid these participants were 12 out of 116 student teachers who filled in the questionnaire, three out of 20 lecturers and nine out of 62 mentors. Seventeen out of 243 (7%) that is to say 10 students, two lecturers and five mentors among those who opined that student teachers
lacked good subject mastery attributed this challenge to lack of resources such as textbooks, libraries and internet. Heavy workload was given as a factor contributing to student teacher insufficient subject mastery by 13 out of 243 (5%) namely, seven students and four mentors and two lecturers among those participants who opined the challenge of lack of adequate subject mastery on the part of student teachers. One participant, namely one mentor gave student teacher lack of industriousness as a factor contributing to student teacher lack of good subject mastery in the primary school subjects.

Pupil indiscipline was regarded by 28 out of 243 (12%) participants as a challenge student teachers faced in lesson presentation. When participants were asked to give the possible causes of pupil indiscipline during lesson delivery by student teachers, the mere knowledge that the student teachers were not fully qualified was given as a cause of pupil indiscipline by 15 out of 243 (6%) participants, namely 12 students, two mentors and one lecturer among those who gave student teacher indiscipline as a challenge student teachers faced. The banning of corporal punishment by student teachers and even the mentor, was given as a cause of pupil indiscipline by 10 out of 243 (4%) participants. These were seven students, two mentors and one lecturer. Very large class sizes was given as a factor contributing to pupil indiscipline by 6 out of 243 (2%) participants, namely four students and two mentors. Poor lesson delivery by student teachers was highlighted as a cause of pupil indiscipline by three mentors out of 243 participants (1%). In support of these opinions some participants had the following statements to make:

M61 Children can be noisy and playful knowing that student teachers spare the rod.
In focus group 6 participants made the following statements:

*Pupils know that this is our teacher, this one is a student teacher. They say we can relax.*

*One of the problems is pupil indiscipline. They know they are not beaten.*

Stifling of student teacher efforts in lesson presentation by mentor was expressed by 32 out of 243 (13%) participants. Five students out of the 243 (2%) participants ascribed such mentor stifling to general inadequacy of teaching time. Mentor inability to handle some issues professionally and mentor failure to supervise student teacher lesson plans before student presented a lesson were some causes of stifling of student teachers given by eleven of the sixteen students (7%).

**4.4.11.9 Causes of ICT linked challenges**

The forms of challenges related to ICT were presented under 4.4.11. Fifty-one out of 243 participants (21%) namely, 47 out of 116 students who completed the questionnaire and four students in focus group 2, gave the opinion that the lack of ICT gadgets was one of the challenges they faced. Limited use of modern technology while student teachers were doing Teaching Practice was ascribed by participants to the absence of gadgets as a result of failure to purchase them because of financial challenge or lack of necessary skills to use gadgets such as power point even if some gadgets may be available or just the influence of tradition.

In addition, 19 out of 243 (8%) participants gave the view that the lack of skills to use modern technology for teaching purposes was an ICT-related challenge they faced. Such
difficulties were attributed by thirteen participants to the limit in the ICT college syllabus, which focuses more on helping student teachers to gain basic skills in using the computers such as those of operating a computer using MS Word, printing and surfing the internet rather than equipping student teachers with skills of using computers to teach pupils while student teachers will be on Teaching Practice. A statement made by one of the participants in support of this view is as follows:

L13 *At our college students are taught ICT skills for their enrichment, not for application in the classroom.*

That student teachers in this study indicated that their inability to incorporate modern technologies in their teaching was attributable to shortcomings in their teacher education curriculum concurs with Desai (2012) who also established that the need to incorporate new technology was an aspect student teachers, in India, felt was not covered in their curriculum.

Lecturer computer phobia or limited use of technology to the advantage of student teachers was mentioned by 16 out of 243 (7%) participants as a challenge the student teachers faced when they were doing Teaching Practice. There was no technological integration by lecturers. According to the participants lecturers were not able to e-mark assignments or projects. The issue of tradition on the part of lecturers was given as one of the causes of this problem by 16 participants. The following statements by some of the participants are in support of this view.

M40 *Lecturers do not e-marking students work. Tradition is the problem.*

L5 *Some lecturers aren’t keen to acquire technological skills*
4.4.11.10 Causes of other TP challenges

Under 4.4.12, TP challenges other than those presented earlier under relevant sub-sections were presented. Eighty-nine out of 243 (37%) participants gave the viewpoint that heavy workload was a challenge student teachers encountered while they were doing Teaching Practice. Work overload was one of the challenges as students had lots of documentation to prepare, assignments to write, research work to do, in addition to varied forms of work given by mentors, other school staff and school administration. The causes of the work overload were attributed by 40 participants to the teachers’ colleges demands and policies and to extra burdens placed on student teachers by staff at the host schools. Fifty-two participants expressed this view. Participants had the following to say to shed some light on the causes of the students’ heavy workload:

M45 Due to the short training period at college student teachers as a result are forced to do many assignments while on T.P.

S14 Some of the assignments are handed in weekly.

S41 The 2-5-2 is very stressful as the demands of assignments whilst on T.P are high.

S44 The mentors and the school staff leave most of the work to student teachers.

The finding made in this study which indicated that student teachers were assigned heavy workload by teacher training institutions corroborates with Mapfumo et.al., (2012) whose study showed that the main source of stress for student teachers which had a bearing on the teacher education institutions was heavy workload as student teachers had to write full
lesson plans daily and had to write distance education assignments, in addition to teaching and doing other teaching responsibilities.

Routine visits to college by student teachers, was a challenge which was noted by 36 out of 243 (15%) participants. Thirty participants assigned this challenge to training college demands such as the need to hand in Curriculum Development Studies (CDS) work and assignments. Eight participants attributed the routine visits to teacher education institutions to non-use of technological facilities such as the internet and the facility of e-mail. Some participants made the following statements in support of these views:

S28 I travel a lot to college yet I could just e-mail assignments or CDS.

S32 Students just have to go to college for CDS consultations. We have to be physically there.

Some of the causes of challenges which were faced by student teachers did not have any bearing on the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two. This implies that causes of challenges which students faced when doing TP may be linked to specific variables obtaining in specific set ups.

4.5 Participants’ views on how challenges faced by student teachers when doing Teaching Practice could be alleviated

All groups of participants were asked to give their views on what could be done to ease challenges which student teachers faced while they were on Teaching Practice. In relation to this, student teachers answered question 21 in their questionnaire, mentors responded to question 12 of their questionnaire and lecturers to question 16 of their questionnaire. A
related question was posed to participants in focus groups. In a way the researcher thought that the researcher could use some responses to these questions as some support, of course in addition to the other findings of the study, for making recommendations of the study in Chapter Five.

Workshops for stakeholders in the process of educating teachers was a suggestion made by 89 out of 243 (37%) participants that is to say 40 students amid those who completed the questionnaire, seven lecturers, 24 mentors and 18 participants in focus groups 2, 4, 5 and 9. Workshops and meetings were suggested for mentors, school heads and lecturers. Some sentiments of participants are represented in the statements they made which are given below:

L11 *Workshop on mentoring.*

L16 *Discussion with school authorities and college staff*

S 105 *Workshops with school heads*

S111 *Mentorship workshops*

L2 *Communication between school administration and college.*

S44 *Mentors and school staff must (maybe) be given a briefing on how to treat student teachers and be given a list of things of what students are supposed to do, starting from college work.*

S5 *Mentors must be trained on how to handle student teachers.*

M7 *The college to give a lecture on lesson planning to mentors*
M6 Collaboration

One participant in focus group 4 had the following to say:

_Workshop lecturers about the ECD programme and document preparation._

Statements by some participants were also suggestive of the need for mentor workshops.

_M49 I am not very delighted though. I do it (mentoring) because it requires people who have been trained to assist students, I was trained to teach primary children._

_M44 Mentors need to be well versed in their duties._

Nineteen out of 243 (8%) participants namely student teachers among those who completed the questionnaire proposed a reduction in the number of assignments that student teachers did while doing Teaching Practice. Eleven students even put forward the view that student teachers should not be given assignments while on Teaching Practice. In support of these suggestions some of the participants made the following suggestions:

_M46 Students should be given less assignments._

_S1 Students must not be given distance assignments._

Of course this is a rather extreme view since assignments, if properly designed, can be an efficient bridge between students and their lecturers. Assignments also provide an opportunity to students to seriously reflect on their practice/s while on Teaching Practice.

Forty-nine out of 243 (20%) participants, that is to say 29 students who completed the questionnaire, 13 mentors and seven lecturers, suggested that the pre-Teaching Practice period at college be lengthened for the purpose of giving student teachers good grasp of
concepts related to actual teaching and at the same time to give adequate practice to students before they go for Teaching Practice. Some supporting statements made by the participants were as follows:

S11 *Some of the topics which are covered or done after Teaching Practice should be covered before student teachers go on Teaching Practice so that they can have time to exercise all the skills.*

S1 *I think the programme of 2-5-2 should be changed or assessed well*

L2 *More time should be allocated on their first residential phase*

M43 *A full year of theoretical education at college is necessary.*

M45 *If the ZINTEC programme is phased out the problems can be overcome*

M59 *More college time will give students more theory and help them gain confidence.*

Fourteen out of 243 (6%) participants, namely four student teachers, four lecturers and six mentors, also stated the need to motivate mentors by giving them some incentive. In relation to this, some students made the following statements:

S86 *I think mentors need some allowances.*

S64 *My mentor expresses the need for some allowances for mentoring.*

L17 *Motivational remuneration may play the trick.*

Mentoring implies more work and so participants viewed mentor motivation as necessary.
The findings made in this study relate to the Educational Systems theory. All the elements in the educational systems theory and their interaction in the educational system contributed to or influenced the forms of experiences and challenges faced by students doing Teaching Practice and the causes of the perceived challenges. Some students’ positive experiences and problems were linked to the teacher educators, mentors and practices prior to and during TP. Host schools at which the student teachers practised contributed to some problems students were facing and the perceived causes of the challenges. In addition, some challenges were specific to individual student teachers.

4.6 Summary

In Chapter Four the researcher presented and analysed the findings of the study. In the chapter effort was made to put the findings in the context of the educational systems theory that directed this study. Findings indicated that student teachers were prepared for Teaching in a variety of ways including lectures, peer teaching, micro teaching, tutorials and a Teaching Practice orientation week. Participants viewed these strategies of preparing student as efficient in many ways, such as preparing student in the areas of Teaching Practice, documents preparation and actual teaching. Nonetheless, in some ways preparation for TP was conceived as not adequate and efficient due to variables such as short preparation time spent at college before students were sent for Teaching Practice and inadequate grasp of very baseline teaching skills. The findings also indicated that there were aspects of practicum which student teachers felt positive about. Some of the aspects were school-related, among which were meeting and interacting with pupils from diverse cultures, good pupil behaviour and the hands-on exposure. The study found out that student teachers faced challenges in applying theory which they had learnt prior to Teaching
Practice in their interaction with mentors, in being supervised and assessed. They faced an array of challenges from school administration, other members of staff and pupils. In this chapter, it has been noted that elements in the educational systems theory and their interaction contributed to some positive aspects student teachers identified regarding their Teaching Practice and to the varied forms of challenges they faced when they were doing Teaching Practice. In the next chapter the researcher gives a summary of the findings, provides conclusions based on the findings of the study and gives recommendations.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study endeavoured to determine the essence of student teacher experiences and challenges that confronted student teachers when they were doing practicum with a view to coming up with some proposals by which student teacher TP related challenges could be alleviated. In Chapter Five, the researcher reviewed her own research in relation to the wide context in which it is located. In this chapter, the researcher included the summary of the chapters presented so far from chapters one to four and organised the summary of the results of the study to the way findings were presented in Chapter Four. Under the conclusions section, the researcher gave key generalisations as the answers to the problems revealed in Chapters One and Two. Lastly, under recommendations the researcher made recommendations for change or improvement and recommendations for further study.

5.2 Thesis summary

The study investigated the experiences of and challenges faced by student teachers when doing Teaching Practice. In the first chapter, the setting of the research problem was provided. The main research question guiding the study was, “What are the challenges encountered by student teachers during their Teaching Practice and what are the causes of the challenges?” The sub research questions guiding this study were:

What pre-TP preparatory strategies are employed by teacher education institutions?
How efficient are pre-TP preparatory strategies used by teacher education institutions?

What positive aspects do students feel about their practicum?

What educator-linked challenges are faced by these student teachers?

What host school-related challenges do student teachers face?

How are the operations of student teachers affected by the perceived challenges?

Why do student teachers face challenges when doing Teaching Practice?

In which areas are student teachers better prepared for TP?

In which areas are student teachers less prepared for TP?

How could college in collaboration with host schools make Teaching Practice a more fruitful experience for student teachers?

Consequently the objectives guiding this study were to:

determine the nature of pre-Teaching Practice preparation strategies and ascertain their efficiency

establish the nature of experiences and challenges faced by student teachers during Teaching Practice

determine the effects of the students’ challenges on the operations of student teachers

ascertain the causes of the challenges which student teachers faced while on TP
determine the appropriateness of college preparatory strategies for Teaching Practice and provide suggestions that could be used to produce guidelines for the provision of quality Teaching Practice in Zimbabwe.

In Chapter One the rationale for conducting the study was given. The study was conducted at a time when key changes in primary teacher development programmes had been introduced. It was carried out after the introduction of the 2-5-2 paradigm and the introduction of the education of ECD teachers at teachers’ colleges. At the time this study was carried out, no comprehensive study had been conducted to ascertain the nature of student-teacher TP experiences in relation to these curriculum changes in teacher education programmes.

In Chapter Two the researcher reviewed literature related to the study after providing data on the facets of the educational systems theory which was chosen to guide the study. The review showed that student teachers in some countries felt positive about certain aspects of their Teaching Practice. However, they also faced some challenges during Teaching Practice. The review of related literature showed that positive experiences and the challenges faced by some student teachers while doing TP could be linked to their education institutions and the schools at which student teachers were doing TP. The findings made in this study were quite in tandem with the principles of the educational systems theory. The findings of the study showed that the contexts in which student teachers did their TP, the teacher education college and other factors had an influence on the essence of TP. student teacher experiences and challenges.
In Chapter Three the researcher described the research methodology that was employed based on the qualitative research paradigm so that researcher could hear ‘voices’ of the participants as the researcher sought their minds on the experiences of student teachers when doing Teaching Practice. The study was grounded in three epistemological models, namely, post positivism, interpretivism and phenomenology. Ontology and epistemology are the two philosophical dimensions that guided the study. For practical purposes the researcher employed triangulation in the use of epistemological models and philosophical dimensions. The study was an exploratory-explanatory case study which explored the ‘what?’ and ‘why?’ of student teachers experiences and challenges while doing Teaching Practice. This qualitative study was conducted in Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. The researcher employed participant as well as instrument triangulation to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings of the study. Two hundred and sixty one STs who were doing TP. at the time the study was carried out, sixty-two mentors at schools where student teachers were placed for Teaching Practice and twenty lecturers from the teacher education colleges made up the sample. Purposive and convenience sampling were employed to determine participants in this study. The researcher administered open–ended questionnaires to 161 student teachers, 62 mentors and 20 lecturers. The researcher also conducted focus group discussions with 45 student teachers and analysed Teaching Practice documents. The researcher found triangulation serving the pragmatic purpose of making it possible for the researcher to confirm and augment the data which were generated from participants from four districts in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. In analysing data, the researcher used the data analysis spiral method, which involved organising the data, getting an overall sense of them, classifying them into themes,
synthesising the generated data and subjecting the data to scrutiny. The constant comparative method was used in analysing the generated data and so commonalities and differences in the generated data were discussed in Chapter Four. Overall, analysis was global and thematic coding was used to present the generated data. Data were generated over two school terms, that is, during the third school term of 2013 and the first school term of 2014. This was meant to allow some member checking, to determine if participants’ views would remain generally the same or different. By and large student sentiments regarding their Teaching Practice experiences and challenges that they encountered remained generally similar. However, the influence of duration of Teaching Practice and the type of school at which student teachers were attached were observed to have some influence on the nature of the data generated during both of the school terms. Ethical considerations including informed consent, and confidentiality were made. In Chapter Four the researcher presented the generated data as honestly as the researcher could to such an extent that even cases of none response in questionnaires and focus groups were reported. The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the Permanent Secretaries for the Ministries of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development and Primary and Secondary Education. To enhance the trustworthiness and realness of findings of the study, much rigour was exercised in the methodological procedures and triangulation was applied. The researcher asked two student teachers who resided in Gweru to reflect on her initial analysis of the generated data and asked them to read through the rough draft of Chapter Four, to ensure accuracy and dependability.

In the next section, the researcher brings to the fore the generated data.
5.3 Summary of findings

5.3.1 Pre-Teaching Practice preparatory strategies and their effectiveness

The study revealed that a variety of strategies were used by teachers’ colleges in preparing student teachers for Teaching Practice. The strategies included micro teaching, peer teaching, lecturers, and sessional tests, provision of practicum modules and handouts and tutorials. In addition, there was one full week set aside for solely TP preparation. It emerged from the study that tutorials and lecturer-prepared handouts were used very minimally and there was no use of lecturer demonstrations. Participants revealed that relevant ground was covered on educational theories, baseline teaching skills including three levels of planning, on lesson delivery and class management and reflection in teaching. Strategies such as lectures were efficient since through them students got the picture of what teaching is about. Nonetheless, the rush for time and large group sizes of student teachers were hindrances to the expected total efficiency of the preparatory strategies that were used. Students were taught basic skills in using computers but not the skills of using modern technology in their teaching. In this study it was found out that students remained unclear about preparation of documents. ECD students remained unclear about records such as the anecdotal. It was established that the use of micro and peer teaching was not efficient in preparing students for Teaching Practice since some principles of micro and peer teaching were not followed.

5.3.2 Aspects of TP student teachers felt positive about

It emerged from the study that student teachers cherished the hands on exposure and being supervised in their teaching. Some student teachers felt positive about their interaction with
pupils from diverse cultures, good pupil behaviour in didactic situations, provision of curriculum materials, and the ability by learners to communicate clearly using the language of instruction.

The study also established that students felt positive about some aspects of being mentored. They felt positive about ways in which mentors were models of right ways of approaching professional issues and being assisted by mentors in doing distance education assignments.

In this research it was found out that very few students delighted in accessing the internet and in using modern technology during lessons. The corrective and formative nature of TP supervision and assessment was appreciated by students.

It surfaced from the study that cooperation and respect from school staff, parents and pupils and in-contact sessions which were held by the teachers’ college during the student teacher’s TP stint were some aspects student teachers felt positive about TP.

5.3.3 Educator challenges faced by student teachers

In this study it was established that students did not have an adequate understanding of the theories relevant to teaching and learning. It emerged from the study that there was limited knowledge of the subject matter (especially in ECD) by some college supervisors. Expectations, suggestions and remarks from college supervisors were inconsistent.

It was found out that there was no adequate understanding in the preparation of Teaching Practice documents. Syllabus interpretation and consequently planning at the medium and immediate levels was a challenge to student teachers. Students did not write lesson plans for tests. The anecdotal record was a challenge to most ECD students. The study revealed
that documents required by college were too numerous for the comfort of students and students had difficulties in managing pupils, in introducing lessons, developing them, in using interactive methodology and using media to the desired effect.

It emerged in the study that lecturers did not e-mark students’ assignments and CDSs and this resulted in time wasting as students travelled to and from college. Students faced the challenge of having no ability in using ICT in teaching and learning environments as they had just been taught basic computer user skills.

5.3.4 Host-school related challenges and their effects on the operations of student teachers

In this study it emerged that the lack of curriculum materials was a challenge students faced. ECD play areas were not adequately equipped and there were no computers and videos. Classrooms were being shared at schools where hot-seating was being practised. Basic textbooks were not available especially in subjects like Home Economics, Physical Education and Religious and Moral Education and Music.

In ECD, student teachers were forced to use English which was against the Zimbabwe Language Policy. Student teachers were denied the opportunity to teach main subjects in the primary school curriculum and to try out new ideas by their mentors.

It surfaced from the study that student teachers suffered disrespect and lack of cooperation from the school staff, mentors, pupils and parents. Disrespect for students cascaded from school administration to other staff and pupils. In addition, some mentors did not have requisite knowledge for effective mentoring to take place. The absence of mentors was a challenge which students faced in some cases. The study revealed that learners displayed
very poor communication in English both orally and in writing and this was a challenge in student teachers’ teaching.

In this study, it emerged that host school related challenges which student teachers faced, caused student teachers to lose confidence, feel demotivated and stressful and made their’ TP experience less productive.

5.3.5 Causes of challenges faced by students

It emerged from the study that the challenge of lack of curriculum materials necessary for effective teaching was attributed to the economic conditions prevailing at the time the study was conducted. The recent introduction of some subjects such as Religious and Moral Education (which was Religious Education before) was also another cause of lack of relevant textbooks in some subjects. Due to the economic conditions prevailing at the time the study was conducted, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was not in a position provide adequate curriculum materials necessary for the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education timeously.

The study revealed that the timing of Teaching Practice which was scheduled third term after STs had spent only six months during which they received theoretical input at college, was a cause of the rush in content coverage for Teaching Practice preparation.

It surfaced from the study that the nature of teacher education syllabi and policies caused the challenge of student teacher heavy workload and student inability to use modern technology in teaching. Mentor negative personality, lack of knowledge in ECD and mentoring in general caused several mentor related challenges.
Participants revealed that general lack of knowledge in ECD which was a relatively new field in Zimbabwe was a cause of many ECD related challenges which trainees faced when doing TP. In this study it was found out that tradition or computer phobia caused lecturers to fail to e-mark students’ assignments and CDSs.

5.3.6 Areas in which students were better prepared and less prepared

It was found out that the theoretical input by college was adequate in giving students a picture of what teaching and learning involved.

The study revealed that students were not fully practically prepared for TP. Principles of micro and peer-teaching were not applied fully. Students were inadequately prepared in all aspects related to delivery of lessons and preparation and upkeep of practicum documents. Inadequate preparation of the students compromised their levels of confidence especially at the commencement of their practicum.

In this research it was found out that students were not prepared to use ICT in their teaching. As a result STs could not mold their teaching in relation to modern technological advancement. Even where modern technology was available STs could not use it for the benefit of pupils.

5.4 Conclusions

This study confirms that at the heart of any productive Teaching Practice, is provision of student teacher support, respect, corroboration, adequate pre-TP. preparation, and sound knowledge of all TP linked activities. Absence of any of these aspects can easily render TP unproductive. For instance, the findings drawn from this study augment that effective TP
supervision and adequate provision of curriculum materials serve as catalysts in student teachers’ process of learning to teach. The role of constructive supervision and provision of adequate curriculum materials was appreciated by participants while lack of these was perceived as a challenge.

The study concludes that new developments or changes in education bring with them challenges which can affect negatively the effectiveness of student teacher practicum. In this study participants perceived that the recent introduction of Early Childhood Development Education in primary schools in Zimbabwe and the training of ECD teachers presented challenges to student teachers while doing TP as well as to other stakeholders in primary education. Students who specialised in ECD did not get specialist guidance as the majority of their supervisors were not specialists in this area. In addition, the absence of corporal punishment, which was a recent development in schools, presented some pupil indiscipline which again was perceived as a challenge by student teachers when doing practicum.

In this study, it has also emerged that when new developments take place, success lies in attitude, skills and support of the people involved. This was particularly so with reference to new developments in ECD and ICT. In this study, for instance, lack of parent support in ECD projects which were organised by student teachers made TP less productive. Lack of computer skills by lecturers and students presented challenges to students when doing practicum.

The study also concludes that success in didactic situations depend largely on the efficient use of the Language of instruction by both pupils and the student teacher. Using L2 as a
language of instruction presented challenges to student teachers who took part in this study.

Quality assurance and control practices such as the emphasis on pupil excelling in tests and examinations appear to be over-emphasised and this has a negative impact on the attainment of practicum goals and objectives.

The study confirmed some aspects TP which student teachers felt positive about and some challenges faced by students when doing TP in other studies conducted in Zimbabwe and other countries. The study has generated fairly new knowledge in other areas like Teaching Practice for ECD students, ICT, absence of corporal punishment in schools, parent or guardian-student teacher relationship and use of English as L2 in schools.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Recommendations aligned to the findings of the study

In line with the findings of the study the following recommendations are put forward:

- Teacher education institutions need to give student teachers more time at college so that their grasp of theory and acquisition of baseline teaching skills are heightened before Teaching Practice.

- There is need for the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development in collaboration with teachers’ colleges to use a teacher education model which gives students adequate time to adequately cover essential skills and knowledge before students go for TP Placement of TP needs to be more timeous than is currently the case.
• Before student teachers can go for TP colleges should help student teachers to marry theory with practice (especially in peer and micro-teaching sessions) without taking for granted that student teachers will work it out when they go for TP.

• Colleges need to run workshops for college-based supervisors frequently so that college-supervision of student teachers is rid of college supervisor inconsistency in expectations on the part of students. Supervisors need to speak one language so as not to confuse and frustrate students.

• Colleges should abandon the practice of assigning any college lecturer to any student. Supervisor specialism in the area of specialisation of the student teacher should be the key criterion to consider. Discipline specific content and content specific pedagogy contribute immensely to supervisor helpfulness as they can provide useful feedback to students.

• Frequent and formalised workshops need to be run by colleges for school administrators and mentors, in mentoring and TP supervision in order to effectively develop student teachers into the professional role of teaching.

• While it is necessary that student teachers experience all aspects of teaching, mentors and school administrators hosting student teachers and the teachers’ colleges need to make lighter the student teacher workload.

• Lecturers should use demonstrations in their teaching so that student teachers do not just learn about the theory, but also learn how some principles are put into practice.
• Teachers’ college ICT curriculum needs to be widened to incorporate the development of student teachers’ skills in integrating ICT in their teaching when they are doing TP, as modern times may demand.

• Standardisation of syllabus interpretation and record keeping should be done at teachers’ colleges to minimise supervisor contradictions when supervising students doing practicum.

• There is need for Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to ensure provision of curriculum materials such as textbooks especially when new subjects are introduced and for practical subjects.

• School administrators need to work closely with School Development Associations (SDAs) in making sure that schools purchase necessary curriculum materials such as sets of first Readers in English so that pupils are assisted to obtain a good foundation in English Language, which in turn would make their learning easier and productive.

• Colleges need to provide a course in e-learning that benefit student teachers and lecturers. Lecturers need to have the necessary skills to e-mark students’ work and students to use e-marked work from lecturers.

• Policy makers should follow up on and monitor policy and make sure it is followed as is the case with ECD use of language of instruction in the country.

• Colleges need to organise extra lessons in English Communication for student teachers who are identified in their main subjects or area of
specialisation to have serious communication problems in using English, before the students go for TP.

- There should be strong collaboration between teacher education institutions and host schools in the students’ practicum to nourish quality in TP.
- School administrators need to educate stakeholders, especially parents/guardians on policy guiding newly introduced programmes in education such as ECD and on the expected roles which they should perform such as community projects in the case of ECD.
- School heads need to positively influence, school staff, pupils and parents on the need to give student teachers respect.
- Some fast track in the education of ECD teachers should be done to close the existing gap between expansion in ECD and the required staffing levels.
- The two ministries responsible for education should liaise and work out a plan on incentivising school administrators and mentors for their noble task in mentoring and supervising students doing TP.
- It is important to train student-teacher skills on how to produce school-or home-made teaching and reading materials to alleviate the problem of shortage of resources.
- There should be in-service training of mentors to improve their mentoring skills and change their attitude towards their work.

5.5.2 Recommendations for further study

The completion of this study points to the need for further research in some related areas. As a result, the researcher recommends the following:
• Further research needs to be conducted on the experiences of student teachers on a larger scale since this study was only conducted in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe which limits the ability to generalise the conclusions made.

• Further research needs to be conducted on experiences of physically challenged student teachers when doing TP.

• Further research needs to be conducted on inclusion in teacher education.

• Further research needs to be conducted to identify practicum experiences by student teachers who are educated through the Open and Distance learning mode.

• Further research needs to be carried out on the place of ICT in initial teacher education.

• There is need to conduct a study on teacher educators’ pedagogical and content knowledge in various disciplines as this determines the quality of student teachers and future teachers.
REFERENCES


Atputhasamy. L. (2013). Cooperating teachers as school based teacher educators: Student


**Websites**

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

[Image of the letter]
APPENDIX 2: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH FROM THE MINISTRY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

All communications should be addressed to “The Provincial Education Director”
Telephone: 054-222460
Fax: 054-226482

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
P.O. Box 737
GWERU

[Signature]

30 OCTOBER 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Permission to carry out a Research on:

- Educating Teacher’s Student Teacher Experience while on teaching practice.

In the Midlands Province has been granted on these conditions.

1. That in carrying out this you do not disturb the learning and teaching programmes in schools.
2. That you avail the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture with a copy of your research findings.
3. That this permission can be withdrawn at anytime by the Provincial Education Director or by any higher officer.

The Education Director wishes you success in your research work and in your University College studies.

[Signature]

Education Officer (Professional Administration And Legal Services)
FOR PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR: MIDLANDS
APPENDIX 3: APPLICATION LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Zimbabwe Open University
89-8th Street
P.O.Box 1810
Gweru.
Zimbabwe.
15th December, 2014

The Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education
P.O. Box CY 121
Causeway.
Harare.

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH ON “An Investigation Into The Challenges To The Centrality Of Teaching Practice In The Student Teachers’ Professional Growth and Competent Classroom Management in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe.”

I kindly request for permission to carry out an educational research on “An Investigation Into The Challenges To The Centrality Of Teaching Practice In The Student Teachers’ Professional Growth and Competent Classroom Management in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe.” in primary schools in SHURUGWI, CHIRUMANZU, KWEKWE AND GWERU districts in the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. I am pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy programme at Zimbabwe Open University.

Please find attached a letter from my institution requesting you to grant me permission to carry out the study.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Rosemary Ngara
APPENDIX 4: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH FROM THE MINISTRY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

All communications should be addressed to
"The Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education"
Telephone: 799114 and 705153
Telegraphic address: "EDUCATION"
Fax: 791923

Reference: C/426/3 Midlands
Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
P.O Box CY 121
Causeway
Harare
ZIMBABWE

9 March 2015

Mrs Rosemary Ngara
Zimbabwe Open University
P. O. Box 1810
Gweru

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN MIDSLEDS PROVINCE: SHURUGWI; CHIRUMANZU; KWEKWE; AND GWERU DISTRICTS

Reference is made to your application to carry out a research at the above district schools in Midlands Province on the research title:

"AN INVESTIGATION INTO CHALLENGES TO THE CENTRALITY OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN THE STUDENT TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND COMPONENT CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN THE MEDIUMS PROVINCE OF ZIMBABWE"

Permission is hereby granted. However, you are required to liaise with the Provincial Education Director Midlands, who is responsible for the schools which you want to involve in your research.

You are required to provide a copy of your final report to the Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education by December 2016.

L. MKwala
Acting Director: Policy Planning, Research and Development
For: SECRETARY FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Cc: PED – Midlands Province
APPENDIX 5: APPLICATION LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF HIGHER AND TERTIARY EDUCATION, AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Zimbabwe Open University

89-8th Street

P.O.Box 1810

Gweru.

Zimbabwe.

The Secretary for Higher and Tertiary Education

P.O.Box CY 7732

Causeway.

Harare.

14th March 2014

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH ON “EDUCATING TEACHERS IN ZIMBABWE: STUDENT TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES WHILE ON TEACHING PRACTICE”

I kindly request for permission to carry out an educational research on “EDUCATING TEACHERS: STUDENT TEACHER EXPERIENCES WHILE ON TEACHING PRACTICE” in primary teacher training institutions in Zimbabwe. I am pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy programme at Zimbabwe Open University.

Please find attached a letter from my institution requesting you to grant me permission to carry out the study.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Rosemary Ngara
APPENDIX 6: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH FROM THE SECRETARY OF HIGHER AND TERTIARY EDUCATION, AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

All official communications should be addressed to “The Secretary”

Reference: E/7/6
SECRETARY FOR HIGHER AND TERTIARY EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT
P.O. Box CY 7732
Causeway
HARARE

31st March 2014
Mrs. R. Ngara
Zimbabwe Open University
P.O. Box 1810
Gweru

Dear Mrs. R. Ngara

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH ON “EDUCATING TEACHERS IN ZIMBABWE; STUDENT TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES WHILE ON TEACHING PRACTICE.”

Reference is made to your letter, in which you request for permission to carry out an educational research on “Educating Teachers in Zimbabwe; Student Teachers’ Experiences While on Teaching Practice.”

Accordingly, be advised that the Head of Ministry has granted permission for you to carry out the research at Primary Teachers Colleges in Zimbabwe.

It is hoped that once completed your research will benefit the Ministry. Accordingly, it would be appreciated if you could supply the Office of the Permanent Secretary with a final copy of your study, as the findings would be relevant to the Ministry’s strategic planning process.

M. Chirapa
for: PERMANENT SECRETARY
APPENDIX 7: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENT TEACHERS

Questionnaire for students

I am Rosemary Ngara and I am a student at Zimbabwe Open University. I am undertaking a study on student teacher experiences while they are on Teaching Practice. The responses that you will give will assist in extending knowledge in the field of Teacher Education. Your responses will be treated in strict confidence. Do not write your name on the questionnaire to remain anonymous and to ensure the confidentiality of your responses. Where boxes are provided place a tick against the box representing your opinion Please answer all questions and give honest responses. Thank you for your co-operation.

1. Gender : I am  Male  Female

2. State the name of the Teacher education programme you are currently enrolled in (e.g. ECD, General course).

3. You are doing your Teaching Practice at a :
   a. Government Urban School
   b. Private Urban School
   c. Government Rural School
   d. Mission School
   e. Council School
   f. Other
      Please
      specify

4. Indicate the Teaching Practice term or semester you are in

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

5. State the ways by which you were prepared by your college or university for Teaching Practice.

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

   b)...............................................................................................................................................


6a). In your opinion was the pre-Teaching Practice education effective?

Yes [ ]  No [ ]

b. Give reasons for your answer in 6(a)

………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………

7. What do you cherish about your actual teaching while you are on T.P?

a)……………………………………………………………………………………………
b)……………………………………………………………………………………………
c)……………………………………………………………………………………………

8 i) What delights you in being mentored by your mentor during T.P?

a)……………………………………………………………………………………………
b)……………………………………………………………………………………………

ii) What forms of modern technology do you use in lesson delivery while you are on T.P?

a)……………………………………………………………………………………………
b)……………………………………………………………………………………………

9. What do you appreciate about T.P supervision by:

i) College/ University lecturers

a)……………………………………………………………………………………………
b)……………………………………………………………………………………………

ii) School-based supervisors

a)……………………………………………………………………………………………
b)……………………………………………………………………………………………

10. State what you cherish about your relationship with:

i) Administration

a)……………………………………………………………………………………………
11. What else do you cherish or like about your T.P?
   a) .............................................................................................................
   b) .............................................................................................................

12. What problems do you face in applying the theory that you learnt prior to your T.P?
   a) .............................................................................................................
   b) .............................................................................................................

13. i) What problems do you as a mentee encounter with your mentor?
   a) .............................................................................................................
   b) .............................................................................................................

   ii) In your view what could be causes of the problems you stated in 13(i)
   a) .............................................................................................................
   b) .............................................................................................................

14 i) State some challenges you face with your T.P supervision and assessment.
   a) .............................................................................................................
   b) .............................................................................................................
(ii) What are the probable causes of the challenges you stated in 14(i) above.

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

b) .........................................................................................................................

15 i) What challenges do you face in your interpersonal relationships with:

School Administrators

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

b) .........................................................................................................................

Parents/ Guardians of pupils

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

b) .........................................................................................................................

Pupils

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

b) .........................................................................................................................

(ii) What do you think are the causes of the challenges you stated in 15(i)

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

b) .........................................................................................................................

16 i) State challenges you encounter in teaching document preparation.

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

b) .........................................................................................................................

(ii) What could be causes of the problems you stated in 16(i)?

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

b) .........................................................................................................................

17. i) State challenges you encounter in your lesson delivery.

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

b) .........................................................................................................................
(ii) In your opinion what could be causes of the challenges you stated I 17(i)?

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

b) ................................................................................................................................................

18. i) What challenges do you face in using Information & Technology while you are doing T.P.?

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

b) ................................................................................................................................................

ii ) What are the causes of the challenges you stated in 18(i)?

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

b) ................................................................................................................................................

19. What other challenges do you face while you are on T.P.?

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

b) ................................................................................................................................................

20. What do you suggest could be done to alleviate problems that student teachers face while they are doing T.P.?

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

b) ................................................................................................................................................

21. What do you think should be done to make T.P. more beneficial to student teachers?

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

b) ................................................................................................................................................

Any other comment

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****Thank you for your co-operation***
APPENDIX 8: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Explain the ways by which your college or university prepared you for T.P.

2. In your opinion how adequately has your college or university prepared you for T.P.?

3. How does your college continue to support your professional growth while you are on T.P.?

4. What do you really cherish about your actual teaching while you are on T.P.?

5. Which teaching skills are you really confident with?

6. What do you consider as positive characteristics of your mentor?

7. What are some of the significant things you are learning from your mentor?

8. How are you benefiting from your T.P. supervision?

9. In your opinion which aspects of your T.P. supervision are of good quality?

10. Which delights do you have in incorporating technology in your classroom?

11. What is positive about your relationship with:
   - school administrators
   - other school staff
   - learners’ parents/guardians
   - learners?

12. What other positive experience have you had in your T.P.?

13. What factors do you attribute to the forms of positive experiences you have had in T.P.?

14. State the forms of learner/pupil - linked problems you are facing. What are the causes of the problems you have stated?

15. What are the challenges you face in applying the teaching and learning theory you learnt prior T.P.? What could be the causes of such problems?

16. What problems do you face with your mentor? To what do you attribute the given problems?

17. State the problems you have as regards your T.P. supervision? What are the probable causes of the problems?
18. What problems do you face in your actual teaching? What are the possible causes?

19. What problems do you face with:
   - school administrators
   - other school staff
   - learners’ parents/guardians
   - learners
   - lecturers

20. What problems do you encounter in preparing teaching documents? Why?

21. What problems do you face in lesson delivery? Why?

22. What other problems do you face while you are on T.P.?

23. What do you suggest could be done to alleviate the problems that student teachers face while on T.P.?

24. What should be done to make student teacher T.P. more beneficial?

25. Any other comment
APPENDIX 9: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LECTURERS

Questionnaire for Lecturers

I am Rosemary Ngara and I am a student at Zimbabwe Open University. I am undertaking a study on student teacher experiences while they are on teaching practice. The responses that you will make will assist in extending knowledge in the field of Teacher Education. Your responses will be treated in strict confidence. Do not write your name on the questionnaire to remain anonymous and to ensure the confidentiality of your responses. Please answer all questions and give honest responses. Thank you for your co-operation.

SECTION A: CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENT (LECTURERS)

Place a tick in the box representing your response.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION

Certificate in Education

Diploma in Education

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

First Degree

Masters Degree

PHD

SEX

Female

Male

YEARS SPENT AS A COLLEGE LECTURER

1-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

Above 20 years

AREA FOR WHICH YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR TRAINING TEACHERS

GENERAL COURSE

ECD
SECTION B

1. State the ways by which your college or university prepares students for T.P.
   a)..............................................................................................................................................
   b)..............................................................................................................................................

2. How effective are the strategies you stated in 1 in preparing students for T.P.?
   a)..............................................................................................................................................
   b)..............................................................................................................................................

3. How well does your college or university equip student teachers with skills necessary in incorporating technology in their classroom while they are on T.P.?
   a)..............................................................................................................................................
   b)..............................................................................................................................................

4. In your opinion what could be done to make the training strategies more effective in preparing students for T.P. than is currently the case?
   a)..............................................................................................................................................
   b)..............................................................................................................................................

5. How does your college continue to support your students’ professional growth while they are on T.P.?
   a)..............................................................................................................................................
   b)..............................................................................................................................................

6. What positive experiences do your students enjoy while they are doing T.P.?
   a)..............................................................................................................................................
   b)..............................................................................................................................................

7. Which factors, in your opinion, contribute to student teacher delight when they are on T.P.?
   a)..............................................................................................................................................
   b)..............................................................................................................................................
8. (i). What college-linked challenges do student teachers face whilst on T.P.?
   a) ............................................................................................................
   b) ............................................................................................................

(ii). What could be the causes of the problems that you have listed under 8(i)
   a) ............................................................................................................
   b) ............................................................................................................

9. (i) What mentor related challenges do student teachers face?
   a) ............................................................................................................
   b) ............................................................................................................

(ii). In your opinion what could be the causes of the mentor-related problems which student teachers face?
   a) ............................................................................................................
   b) ............................................................................................................

10. (i). What supervision and assessment problems do student teachers face while they are on T.P.?
    a) ............................................................................................................
    b) ............................................................................................................

11. (ii.) What are the possible causes of the issues you stated under 11 (i)?
    a) ............................................................................................................
    b) ............................................................................................................

12 (i.) What problems do students face from:
    - Learners?
      a) ............................................................................................................
      b) ............................................................................................................
    - School administrators?
      a) ............................................................................................................
b) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

- Other members of staff?

a) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

b) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

- Parents/guardians of learners?

a) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

b) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

13. (i) What problems do student teachers generally face in the writing of teaching documents?

a) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

b) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

13. (ii) What could be the causes of the problems student teachers face in the writing of teaching documents?

a) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

b) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

14. (i) What challenges do student teachers face in actual lesson delivery?

a) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

b) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

14 (ii) What are the possible causes of the problems student teachers face in lesson delivery?

a) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

b) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

15. State any other challenges student teachers face while they are on T.P.?

a) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

b) ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

16. How could the challenges that student teachers while they are on T.P. be overcome?
17. State any three barriers to effective Teaching Practice.

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

b) .................................................................

c) .................................................................

18. State any two facilitating variables to effective T.P.

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

b) .................................................................

19. Any other comment on student teacher experiences while they are on T.P.?

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*****THANKS ONCE AGAIN FOR YOUR COOPERATION*******
APPENDIX 10: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MENTORS

Questionnaire for Mentors

I am Rosemary Ngara and I am a student at Zimbabwe Open University. I am undertaking a study on student teacher experiences while they are on Teaching Practice (T.P.). The responses that you will make will assist in extending knowledge in the field of Teacher Education. Your responses will be treated in strict confidence. Do not write your name on the questionnaire to remain anonymous and to ensure the confidentiality of your responses. Please answer all questions and give honest responses. Thank you for your co-operation.

SECTION A: CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENT (MENTOR)

Place a tick in the box representing your response

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<td>Diploma in Education</td>
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Government Urban
Council Urban
Council Rural
Mission
Private Urban
Private Rural

SECTION B

1. What critical roles do you perform in mentoring student teachers on Teaching Practice?

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2. (i) Which mentoring roles do you sometimes fail to perform?

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ii) Why do you sometimes fail to perform the roles you have stated in 2(i) ?

a) ...........................................................................................................................................................................
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3. What really delights you about being a mentor of students doing T.P.?

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4. (i) What aspects of T.P. delight student teachers while students are on Teaching Practice?

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5. Which factors, in your opinion, contribute to student teacher delight when they are on T.P.?
6 (i). What college-linked challenges do student teachers face whilst on T.P.?

(ii). What could be the causes of the problems that you have listed under 6(i)?

7. (i). What mentoring related challenges do student teachers face?

(ii). In your opinion what could be the causes of the mentoring-related problems which student teachers face?

8. (i) What supervision and assessment problems do student teachers face while they are on T.P.?

8(ii.) What are the possible causes of the issues you stated under 8(i)?

8 (iii.) What problems do students face from:

- Learners?
• School administrators?

• Other members of staff?

• Parents/guardians of learners?

9.(i) What problems do student teachers generally face in the writing of teaching documents?

9. (ii.) What could be the causes of the problems student teachers face in the writing of teaching documents?

10 (i.) What challenges do student teachers face in lesson delivery?

10 (ii.) What are the possible causes of the problems student teachers face in lesson delivery?

11. State any other challenges student teachers face while they are on T.P.?
12. How could the challenges that student teachers face while they are on T.P. be overcome?

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13. State any three barriers to effective Teaching Practice.

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14. State any two facilitating variables to effective T.P.

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*****THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN FOR YOUR COOPERATION*******
APPENDIX 11: STUDENT TEACHER TEACHING DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

STUDENT TEACHER TEACHING DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

A) Type of document: ...........................................................................................................................

B) Abilities displayed:
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C) Weaknesses displayed:
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APPENDIX 12: T.P. REPORTS DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

T.P.REPORTS DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

a) Type of Report: ........................................................................................................

b) Aspects of student T.P. positively reported on

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(c) Student challenges/problems reported on

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