

# Teacher's Description of Their In-Service Lived Experiences of Teaching ESL in Luanshya District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia

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## ABSTRACT

This study was intended to establish how teachers described their In-Service lived experiences of teaching English as a Second Language in Luanshya District on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia. A narrative design was employed as it gave the participants of the study an opportunity to construct and reconstruct their In-Service stories of teaching ESL in Luanshya. The narrative theory was used as a lens through which the whole study was interpreted. The methodological approach was qualitative. The sample size consisted of eight (8) teachers. These participants were purposefully sampled from eight (8) different secondary schools of Luanshya District. The findings had shown that teachers had similar experiences such as mismatch between college and classroom content, lack of teaching/learning materials and overcrowded classroom. The study recommended that teacher training institution should review English as Second Language curricula documents so as to align them with classroom content. The study also recommended that the government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of Education should build more classroom space so as to decongest the current classrooms. The study further recommended that government of the Republic of Zambia should procure more learning/teaching materials so as to cater for the increased numbers of learners.

**Key Words:** Lived Experiences, Teachers, In-Service and ESL

## INTRODUCTION

### Understanding Lived Experiences

The application of the term lived experiences has grown in its popularity among so many academicians from various disciplines including education (Croucher et al., 2017; Neale 2016; Abbot & Wilson 2012). However, there is a need to understand what this concept means, its origins and its application if it is to be fully appreciated.

### Lived Experiences Defined

Lived experiences can be explained as all the encounters that humans may go through as individuals, with families, friends, relatives, institutions, circumstances or even nature and how all these happenstances shape their insight about knowledge, meaning and decision-making. With lived experiences, the focus is not only on what humans go through. How they navigate through their experiences also matters (Bylorn, 2008). Research has also indicated that lived experiences can be explained as both first-hand and constant interactions of individuals, with the world they live in and in return, these activities through reflection and analysis shape choices, knowledge, conduct, behaviour and sense or meaning-making (Van Manen, 2014; Given, 2008; Patton, 2002)

### Origins of the Concept of Lived Experiences

The origin of the term lived experiences has been closely linked to phenomenology, feminism and ethnography. To begin with, research has confirmed that there is a close relationship between the roots of lived experiences and the phenomenological tradition (Van Mannen, 2014; Mapp, 2008; Mooran, 2000). According to Mooran

(2000) phenomenology as a philosophical approach emerged from the works of a German philosopher called Edmund Husserl between 1859 and 1938. The approach criticized the positivist stance of looking at reality and advocated a subjective position through the mind of a person experiencing a given phenomenon. This marked the birth of the term 'lived experiences'. Van Mannen (2015) proposed that phenomenology avoids conceptualizing the world as a way of understanding it. Instead, it directs its focus on reflecting on first-hand experiences of the world to gain a rich understanding of day-to-day human activities. Description, analysis and interpretation of lived experiences are what constitute the foundation of phenomenology. In the process of describing an experience or phenomenon, Husserl called for the use of what he termed as an 'epoche' suspending of prior knowledge (Gallagher & Zahavi 2012). The origins of lived experience can also be situated within the confines of feminism. Around 1930 and 1940 an approach called feminist phenomenology emerged and was pioneered by Simone de Beauvoir and Edith Stein. This philosophical movement called for awareness of sexual differences and recognition of women as possessing unique experiences and a consciousness (Heinamaa & Rodemeyer, 2010). In this feminist approach, concerns with lived experiences were about giving women a voice to share their experiences. The goal was to foster sisterhood and form resistance to subservience (Kruks 2014). Even in this modern age, feminism still provides insights into the understanding of embodied gendered lived experiences. It integrates hope to it by bringing to light what has been the trend and advocating for change (Heinamaa & Rodemeyer, 2010; Olkowski & Weiss, 2006). Ethnography emerged in the 1800s in early anthropology. It can be traced back to the colonization of the New World when anthropologists became interested in exploring races and cultures outside Europe. Ethnographers had to spend months or years conducting research (Ryan, 2017). Firsthand experience and exploration of social setting is key to ethnography. It is the latter which links ethnography to lived experiences.

### **Lived Experiences and Education**

Research has indicated that learning, be it at the childhood level, secondary or tertiary level is built around relationships and experiences. Research further indicates that the greatest privilege that human beings have is that of learning from both personal experiences and the experiences of other people (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Pianta, 2006; Farrel, 2020). It can therefore be concluded that there is a strong link between lived experiences and education. Hermeneutic phenomenology has shown that lived experiences help to bridge the gap which exists between theory and practice. It does so by highlighting what exactly takes place in a classroom situation as opposed to what should take place (Friensen, 2012). Friensen further contended that lived experiences transport the teacher in the light of knowledge and understanding of classroom matters from the peripheral to the deep. This gesture gives a teacher a different perspective on everyday pedagogical practice. Singleton (2015) added that this kind of pedagogical practice is based on three premises which are; head (thinking), heart (feeling), and hand (acting). The interpretation of the premises is that for a teaching experience to qualify as being a lived experience, a teacher or learner must be conscious of the teaching/learning process. Secondly, this aforementioned process must appeal to the emotions of both the learner and the teacher. Lastly, the experience must be first-hand or hands-on. Langdridge (2007) contended that the personal experiences and feelings of both teachers and learners constitute the reality from which knowledge is constructed and reconstructed during teaching and learning.

### **Lived Experiences and Educational Research**

The principle of interpretation of lived experiences within the auspices of hermeneutics phenomenology is what has influenced educational research. Patton (2002) argued the interpretation as: "attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order on an unruly but patterned world (p. 480)." From the above quotation, it can therefore be deciphered that research is inconclusive if data has not been analyzed to draw conclusions that can offer meaningful solutions to problems. Finlay (2003) noted that when engaging with lived experiences in research, the data analysis perspective shifts from the normal tradition of objectivity to a subjective posture in which researchers combine personal understandings and experiences to draw meaning from acquired data. The participants' actual experiences are the most informative source of knowledge in educational research. The study of lived experiences reveals a deeper understanding of what education is all about (Allen, 1995). When scholars understand human experiences as a book that provides rich and detailed accounts of occurrences, the aforementioned is attained (Hein & Austin, 2001). This interpretive

process continues until a point in time when the experience's reasonable meanings emerge, free of internal conflicts (Kvale, 1996). In light of the above discussions, it can therefore be concluded that the subject of lived experiences is not new. Phenomenological scholars have researched extensively on this subject. However, the weakness of the phenomenological approach is its overreliance on descriptive methods of data collection and analysis. Research has shown that such methods are shallow. In this study on how teachers' lived experiences may be used to enhance pedagogy in ESL teaching, I employed the narrative approach to counter the above weaknesses.

It is from the foregoing discussions that this study endeavored to investigate lived experiences of In-Service teachers of English as a Second Language in Luanshya District of the Copperbelt province of Zambia.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The knowledge gap that this study endeavored to fill was how the Teachers of English as a Second Language in Luanshya District of the Copperbelt Province of Zambia described their In-Service lived experiences and how these descriptions influenced their way of teaching.

### **Research Objectives**

To establish how teachers of Luanshya District described their In-Service lived experiences and how these experiences influenced their teaching of ESL.

### **Research Questions**

How do teachers of Luanshya District describe their In-Service lived experiences and how do these experiences influence their teaching of ESL.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Qualitative Approach**

The study followed a qualitative approach by using narrative inquiry strategy. What was needed were thick descriptions of the stories of In-Service teachers and how their narrations influenced their ways of teaching English as a Second Language.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

Interview guides and an audio recorder were the instruments used for data collection. Interview guides helped to elicit information during face-to-face interviews with teachers to find out their lived experiences with English as a Second Language. Interviews were conducted with eight (8) teachers from eight (8) different secondary schools within Luanshya district on the Copperbelt province of Zambia. Purposeful sampling was used so as to come up with the participants of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The findings were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved identification of similar themes, putting them into patterns or groups. These would later be coded, interpreted and meaning be deciphered from them.

### **Trustworthiness**

One of the strategies used to ensure quality in research is trustworthiness. It focuses on the extent to which findings can be deemed to be reliable and credible. To ensure the aforementioned, the final results were subjected to member checking where respondents had to confirm their responses. Furthermore, all steps followed were clearly documented so as to serve as a guide if one was to repeat the study.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants were free to discontinue their involvement in this study at any point they felt like without giving any reason. Confidentiality was also of top priority and consent forms were to be signed by all the participants who were involved.

## **Theoretical Framework**

John Fisher, a communication professional, proposed the narrative theory in 1960 (Fisher, 1985). In his worldview, he contended that the only way to exchange important knowledge is through tale-telling because people are born storytellers. The primary claim of this theory is that information is more convincing when provided in a narrative format rather than in an argumentative approach. Fisher established the narrative theory in response to his discontent with the way the rational theory understood human communication based on logical reasoning (Rowland, 1988). Fisher argued that ideas could be manipulated in a narrative sense-making way. The aforesaid proposal by Fisher was in line with my research as I sought to explore the stories of ESL teachers encapsulated as lived experiences, the meaning the teachers drew from them and how this meaning of ESL influenced classroom practice.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Within the Zambian context, no study had been conducted on how In-Service teachers of English as a Second Language described their lived experiences and how these experiences influenced their teaching. However, there are some studies which mentioned the aspect of experience although their foci were different. Shwandi (2017) conducted a study on experiences and challenges faced by teachers and pupils of large classes in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district. Her study indicated the following as being challenges; incomplete marking of books, too much noise and lots of distractions during classes. This study is different from my study in that Shwandi (2017) had no particular focus in terms of the subjects. My study was only interested in ESL teaching. Secondly, the study under review looked at any kind of current experiences within the classroom set-up whereas my study focused on both prior and present experiences with language and how these experiences influenced classroom decisions. Manchishi and Mwanza (2013) conducted a study to establish the effectiveness of the University of Zambia school teaching experience. Data was collected using interview guides, observation checklists and focus group discussions. Eighty (80) student teachers, eighty (80) serving teachers and ten (10) Headteachers were drawn from ten (10) high schools in Lusaka District. The findings indicated that the design and delivery of the Unza student teaching experience was not effective. This study indicated that student teaching practice experience is at the centre of teacher training programmes. It allows a novice teacher to behave like a fully trained professional within a real classroom situation. However, this programme had its weakness as student teachers were given six weeks to do their practice and the first week was for observation. The time given was not enough for teachers to learn how to put theory into practice. As a result of time constraints, student teachers may not have an opportunity to create their realities about teaching based on the experiences they go through. My research into lived experiences was to help bring out insights into how teacher experiences could be used to make teacher education programmes and teaching experiences more effective. Manchishi and Mwanza (2016) sought to establish whether or not peer teaching was still a useful technique in introducing student teachers to the practical realities of teaching. A qualitative method was used and 16 teacher educators and 40 finalist students were interviewed. The findings indicated that it was still useful but faced a lot of challenges such as being allotted little time, lack of teaching materials and inadequate lecturers. From this study, it can be seen that experiences such as peer teaching are beneficial because students teaching skills are sharpened by evaluations given by lecturers and peers. However, this study focused on peer teaching whereas my study focused on the practising teachers, even though they would also provide narratives about their pre-service experiences. Masaiti and Manchishi (2011) conducted a study on the responsiveness of the University of Zambia (Unza) pre-service teacher education programmes to schools and communities. This research was conducted in the Lusaka, Kafue and Chongwe Districts of Lusaka Province. Face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data. The findings revealed gaps between Unza programmes and what was obtaining in high schools. Unza trained teachers were very weak in methodology. There was a need to re-examine teacher training programmes. The findings of this study raise a lot of concerns. The University of Zambia is still perceived as the highest institution of learning in Zambia. Besides this, it has over 14 government colleges of teacher education



affiliated with it. One wonders how it provides checks and balances to the affiliate college programmes when its own is perceived to be irrelevant and produces graduates who are failing to put theoretical aspects of their subjects into practical realities of the classroom. Banja and Mulenga (2019) analysed the quality of teacher education at the University of Zambia. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from 392 participants comprising students, newly qualified teachers, heads of department deans and lecturers. The findings indicated some institutional weaknesses such as inadequacy of teaching practice experience and mismatch between subject content offered at the University of Zambia and content taught at the secondary school level. The study under analysis is different from my study. The latter focused on teacher education whereas my study focused on lived experiences of ESL teachers only. Insights from this topic may help explain the foundations of the mentioned challenges and provide suggestions on how teacher education programmes can be made more responsive to high school needs. Phiri (2021) researched teacher cognition in grammar teaching and testing in the Luanshya District. However, one of her objectives focused on how the experiences of teachers affected the way they taught and tested grammar. The findings on this objective revealed that teachers maintained the assessment practices of their past teachers. This study is different from my study in that Phiri (2021) just had one objective on experiences whereas in my study all my objectives are on the lived experiences of ESL teachers. Secondly, Phiri just focused on grammar teaching and testing whereas my study focused on all the components of ESL such as composition, comprehension, writing, speaking and listening. From the studies reviewed, it can be seen that the experiences of teachers are studied but in a peripheral manner. To appreciate and benefit fully from teachers' lived experiences, fully fledged studies are advocated, hence this research.

### **Related Studies Within The African Context**

In South Africa, Anyanwu (2016) conducted a study to understand student teachers' experiences in the high school English classrooms and the impact of any of their experiences on their decisions to become teachers of English. It was a phenomenological study underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm. The findings revealed that student teachers at Kwazulu Natal University had both positive and negative experiences with schooling in general and English language learning in particular. The experiences were subjective and unique to individuals. These experiences also impacted their university learning, positively and negatively. This study had shown that experiences can influence career decisions. However, it was not known whether the experiences of the teachers in my study had any influence on their career choices. While this study focused on the high school experiences of student teachers, my study focused on all forms of experiences that teachers have had with ESL such as past, present, formal or informal and how these experiences may enhance ESL teaching. In Mozambique, Nhapulo (2013) conducted a study on teacher and learner beliefs and expectations about English language teaching and learning at a Mozambican university. Using questionnaires and focus group discussions data on Mozambican linguistic profile, the learner and teacher beliefs and their influence in tertiary English language learning and teaching were gathered. The results indicated the need for creating an environment in which teachers' and learners' cultural backgrounds, beliefs and needs are considered for effective teaching and learning. From the studies above, it is evident to see that research on lived experiences was being conducted with varying focuses. However, more studies are still needed in Africa on lived experiences to provide detailed knowledge on how they can be used to enhance ESL pedagogy.

### **Related Studies beyond the African Context**

Outside Africa, the topic of teachers' lived experiences is not new. Several studies have been conducted. Yan et'al (2018) examined the experiences of ESL trainee teachers in Hong Kong during their practicum. Data was collected using 74 field trip forms and 74 evaluation sheets and later analysed. The findings indicated that students lacked pedagogical knowledge. From this study, it can be noticed that even in Asian countries like Hong Kong teacher experiences are being studied. However, the focus of this study was on trainee teacher experiences whereas this study focused on forms and levels of ESL teachers' lived experiences. The other weakness in the study under analysis was that it relied so much on evaluation trips. Classroom observation would have added depth to the findings. In Iran, Eslami (2016) examined initial language teaching beliefs and attitudes towards ESL among 354 pre-service teachers in a public university and compared them after 3 to 4 years of ESL coursework. The findings had shown a change in the beliefs and attitudes of pre-service teachers as there was a shift towards current research knowledge. It must be noticed that students do not enter teacher education training with a blank mind; instead, they have their knowledge which they created based on personal experiences before

teacher education training. It must be mentioned that it's not easy to change beliefs and attitudes which took many years to build. It only takes teacher training programmes which understand how these experiences are formed and their nature among pre-service or in-service teachers. This study was to throw its thrust on understanding how formal or informal experiences build predispositions of pre-service as well as in-service teachers concerning ESL teaching. The influence of lived experiences on ESL classrooms will also be investigated. One of the weaknesses of Eslami's (2016) study is that it did not consider classroom observations to triangulate the findings. Deng and Hyden (2021) conducted a study on how pre-service teachers begin to develop an equitable vision for teaching multilingual learners. This study surveyed final-year pre-service teachers pursuing elementary education. Historically situated practices were used to collect data. The findings indicated contradictory beliefs about multilingual learners influenced by background and experiences. This study is important as it brings out information concerning multilingual states. Multilingual classrooms are made up of teachers and learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds and experiences. My study also was conducted in Zambia which is a multilingual state with over 73 languages. The findings of this study were to help bring out multilingual experiences and help suggest ways in which they can be used to enhance pedagogy in Zambian multilingual classrooms. Miller (2017) examined the school memories of a cohort of bilingual pre-service teachers' experience as English learners. Participants were told to describe memories from elementary school and later used that memory to reflect on their impact on their teaching. Data were analysed inductively. Themes such as school transition, embarrassing moments in classrooms and discovering a call to teaching were highlighted. Each memory was related to dispositions and actions as bilingual teachers. My study is different from that of Miller (2017). He focused on bilingual teachers whereas my focus was on monolingual teachers of ESL. It must also be noted that in-service and pre-service teachers were once learners. Memories of teachers being learners whether good or bad may leave a lifetime impact. Teachers may avoid certain actions in class because they are reminding them of embarrassing experiences they went through. This study explored the lived experiences of ESL teachers in Zambia, whether good or bad, from childhood through to in-service. In Chile, Cairo (2020) assessed the impact of apprenticeship of observation on 8 Pre-service teacher beliefs. It was a qualitative study which used a multiple-case design. Data was collected using narrative frames and interviews. The findings indicated that they were strongly influenced by it, leading them to replicate or avoid certain practices depending on the context. Apprenticeship of observation means that students do not enter pre-service education without any idea of what they will be studying. On the contrary, they spend a lot of hours listening to other people teach them. With time they create their knowledge about fields before taking them up as professions. This study was conducted in Chile. My study was conducted in Zambia in Luanshya District in the Copperbelt Province. Boyd et al., (2013) researched the influence of past and current learning experiences of preservice teachers on their microteaching practices. The Ex post facto approach was used to analyse the previous learning experiences and cognitions. The findings had shown that past learning experiences had an undesirable impact on how they viewed teaching. Moodie (2016) engage in a narrative inquiry involving 18 pre-service teachers. Narrative frames and semistructured interviews were used to collect data. The findings indicated that the experiences of the students in public schools while learning English discouraged apprenticeship of observation. Their teachers were perceived as role models of what not to do while in class. The findings from the above studies are further supported by Biesta (2015) who stated that learners are more likely to do what they see the teacher doing than what the teacher teaches. However, it must be noted that sometimes the learners may dislike what the teachers do or the approaches they take while teaching. Such a predisposition on the part of the learner will act as a lens through which apprenticeship of observation is rejected.

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Teacher's Description of Their In-Service Experiences of Teaching ESL in the Zambian Context**

From my findings teachers of Luanshya District described their experiences of teaching ESL in the following ways: the number of years they had been teaching ESL; their routine ESL teaching duties; negative experiences; positive experiences; ESL knowledge conflicts; resolutions to ESL knowledge conflicts: Policy changes; and current ESL teaching and learning challenges.

### **Teaching Experience In Years**

Teachers were asked how long they had been teaching ESL and from my findings, I noticed that the number of years that teachers of Luanshya District had spent while teaching ESL varied in length and ranged from one and a half year to thirty years. For example, Teacher 2 was the oldest of all the teachers and had spent thirty years teaching ESL. Teacher 8 was the second oldest with about 45 years. She had spent 16 years teaching ESL. Teacher 5 had spent 11 years while Teacher 7 had taught for 9 years. Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 had been teaching for 6 years. Teacher 4 had spent 6 years in the teaching of ESL. Of all the teachers the one who had the least number of years was Teacher 6 with just one and half a years.

From the above-given findings, it is plain to see that almost all the teachers had spent a considerable number of years teaching ESL except for Teacher 6. The advantage of having taught for a long time was seen in the way Teacher 2 and Teacher 8 who had spent 30 and 16 years of experience respectively, delivered their lessons. I noticed the confidence, precision and clarity that they demonstrated as they were teaching. However, they were teachers like Teacher 7 whose lesson was so disorganized despite spending 9 years in the teaching profession. This teacher did not even have a lesson plan. My observations on Teacher 2 and Teacher 8 are in line with Kini and Podolsky (2016) who cited teaching experience as being associated with greater gains in effective teaching. Furthermore, experienced teachers had passed the stage of trial and error, so they knew what could work and what could not work in a given classroom situation (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999). However, Kini and Podolsky (2016) warned that variations existed at every stage because not every inexperienced teacher is less effective and not every experienced teacher is more effective. The aforesaid was true in the case of T7. From the above-given comment, it can therefore be deciphered that what matters the most is not the number of years a teacher spends teaching ESL but the experiences in terms of knowledge and practice that help him or her to gain effectiveness in lesson delivery. The pedagogical implications of these finding are that regardless of the ESL teachers' years in service, they must be deliberately exposed to more knowledge about ESL teaching through continuous professional development programs and be given more classroom time to put their knowledge to practice.

### Teaching Routines

The findings indicated also that teachers had similar teaching routines. When I asked what these routines were, all of them narrated that before the beginning of any term they had to prepare ESL schemes of work using the English syllabus. When schools open they had to prepare lesson plans based on the schemes and teach learners. The items they taught included; comprehension, summary, structure and composition. From the narrations, no teacher mentioned teaching extensive reading, listening and speaking. This can be deciphered from the following responses:

**Teacher 1** *'before opening we have what we call zero weeks, this is the week before the beginning of each term, we hold planning meetings where we discuss, so many issues such as resources, timetables, staffing levels, scheming, transfers and open days*

**Teacher 2:** *All the years that I have been teaching my classroom activities are the same. I teach summary, comprehension, composition and structure.*

**Teacher 3:** *It is the usual thing, sir. Of course, I make schemes, prepare lesson plans and teach comprehension, compositions, structure and summary.*

**Teacher 4:** *Sir, it is the same things year in and year out whether it is grade twelve or grade nine. Same items, composition, comprehension and structure and summary*

**Teacher 5:** *We scheme, and write lesson plans and marks and the teacher*

**Teacher 8:** *it's all about planning scheming, marking and teaching*

From the responses of the above teachers what is more pronounced in their routines is the aspect of planning which teachers do as either individuals or as departments. They also plan for the term as well as for their everyday lessons. Research explains planning at the school level as a process of projecting into the future, where teachers make decisions concerning curricula about what students will learn and the types of learning experiences that

they will be subjected to (Curriculum Framework, 2012). From this explanation, it can be seen that planning is an integral part of the teaching career. Without planning the future of all teaching activities become uncertain. It is therefore important that teachers of ESL engage in planning activities whether at the classroom or departmental level to provide order to the profession and guarantee its future.

### Negative and Positive Experiences

In these findings, it was also discovered that in their teaching journeys, some teachers had what they called depressing moments. Some teachers mentioned that these were times that really drained them and affected them mentally, physically and emotionally.

Teacher 3 narrated the time when she was first deployed by the government. She was sent to rural areas where there were no ESL teaching materials. There was also no internet as a result she said she could not even research for more information. Her learners also could not understand English and she equally could not speak their regional local language. According to her, the situation was so complicated. She also added that her fellow teachers were not helpful. This can be interpreted from the following verbatim:

**Teacher 3:** *I grew up in the Northern Province of Mbala. It was an urban setup but our lives were different because my father and mother were working. They could teach me English when they knock off from work. I enjoyed English. It was easy for me. The schools I went to made me like them more. We had all the learning materials. The environment was so encouraging. When I completed my university, I thought I was going to find the same experiences but it was different. I was first posted in a rural area in Kasama. There was no internet, no teaching material. The learners were of low calibre. They could not speak or understand English. They didn't even understand what I was teaching them. They had no interest in school. This was depressing on my part. I just could not apply myself and just teach the way I should.*

From the above-given response, it can be deciphered that Teacher 3 did not struggle when she was a learner of ESL due to the support she was given by her parents and the schools she went to which provided a suitable environment. Because of her experiences as a learner, Teacher 3 was hoping to find the same situation where ever she was to be deployed. However, the reality became contrary to her expectations. Such a situation has the potential to dampen the morale of a teacher and affect her output. Effective induction programmes may help alleviate such situations (Brining, 2015). Teacher 7 also narrated that he had just arrived at his current station, without so much experience and was given a grade 12 class which he described as having learners who were over aged with unruly and silly behaviour. Teacher 7 narrated how they could pass silly comments while the lesson was in progress as evidenced in the following verbatim:

**Teacher 7:** *I had just been deployed to this station and I was given a grade 12 class which was abandoned by other teachers. They gave me hell. The majority of them were overaged, with unruly behaviour. When teaching pupils would just yell, and pass silly comments. In our days you could not do that in class. Our teachers never tolerated nonsense. They could whip us. In those days corporal punishment was allowed. It is not like today. Things have changed corporal punishment has been abolished by the government. But sometimes I just have to whip them. I also rebuke them strongly*

What is coming out prominent in the above narrative by Teacher 7 is the issue of unruly behaviour by learners. Such a situation has the potential to sway the teacher away from content coverage to behaviour management. However, Teacher 7 seem to have found coping strategies such as giving strong rebukes and even engaging in corporal punishment in trying to control the students he branded as silly and unruly. These findings are in line with Borg (2003) who surmised that with experience teachers learn to automatise classroom management and direct their focus to issues of content. Another thing worth mentioning is Teacher 7's administration of corporal punishment to the learners. The Ministry of Education in Zambia does not support the use of corporal punishment to control learner behaviour. So, what Teacher 7 was doing is not supported by policy. The decision by Teacher 7 to go against policy may have been influenced by how his previous teachers handled unruly behaviour by the administration of corporal punishment. The pedagogical implications of these findings are that the teachers' past learning experiences may be a hindrance to policy implementation if ignored. One way of how resistance to



policy implementation may be alleviated is by engaging teachers in the entire process of policy formulation to cultivate a sense of ownership of the policies in the minds of these teachers.

**Teacher 8** also had this to say: *The most depressing part of my teaching English has been the learners. They have been so discouraging and this keeps going on. They have been discouraging me. I try everything I can do as a teacher but they don't seem to be learning anything, especially at this school. Only a handful seems to know what is happening.*

From the above narrative, it can be noted that the teaching career was far from straightforward. ESL teachers in Zambia had various experiences which were both negative and positive. The above findings are in tandem with Herzberg (1966) in Fellisa et al., (2022) who explained that certain work experiences can be satisfying while others are depressing. They further added that when employees are satisfied, they produce the most successful results. However, they can also be depressed by unsupportive experiences (environments). The pedagogical implications of these findings are that these experiences are what may form teachers' beliefs, values and knowledge which directly or indirectly influence their classroom performance (Fellisa et al., 2022). As a result, specific ESL instructional strategies may be avoided or promoted based on these experiences (Numeric, 1996). However, some teachers narrated moments they termed as exciting as the quotations below will show;

**Teacher 3:** *I felt really happy when I was transferred from a rural school to the urban school where I am right now. At least, there is internet here. I can research even on my phone. We have a fully-fledged library. When I am teaching pupils can understand what I am saying. My teaching has become simple and enjoyable.*

From the above narrations, it can be noticed that Teacher 3 was excited when she was transferred from a rural set-up school to another school which was so developed and urbanised. At her new school, she narrated that it had almost everything that a teacher of ESL would want such as pupils who could read and understand English, reading materials, the internet, and a fully-fledged library. To her, this made the teaching of English simple and enjoyable. What may explain Teacher 3's current happiness was her schooling background. This teacher was born and schooled in the urban areas of Mbala and Kasama where the environments were conducive to learning. Therefore, her current work environment resonates with the kind of learning environment that she was brought up in. This also explains why she was depressed when she was deployed to rural areas because her childhood urban experiences could not resonate with her rural work experiences. As for Teacher 2 and Teacher 4 and Teacher 7, they narrated that the passing of pupils in the final ESL examinations, as well as the improvement of disadvantaged pupils, excited them. Their responses are shown below:

**Teacher 2:** *It is always exciting to see learners who come from homes that are disadvantaged changing to become fluent readers. That is exciting to me.*

**Teacher 4:** *When the results of the Grade 12 finals are out and my learners have passed, that excites me.*

**Teacher 7:** *When you are given a worst-performing class which has no hope of passing, then you push them and in the end, they get to pass. Such moments are amazing.*

What can be deciphered from the above comments by Teacher 2, Teacher 4 and Teacher 7 is a sense of inner satisfaction which comes with achieving one's goal. This situation is what motivates teachers to work even hard despite the many challenges they face such as lack of teaching materials, unruly behaviour of learners and overcrowding (Mwanza, 2016; Mumba 2019).

## Conflicts in Knowledge

Almost all the teachers narrated experiencing some conflicts in terms of ESL knowledge at one stage or another. These conflicts were both internal and external. For example, some teachers narrated the following:

**Teacher 1:** *I found the course did not match the things I teach at school*

**Teacher 7:** *most of the courses at college were not directly related to classroom content.*

**Teacher 3:** *the teaching methodologies I learnt in college never covered the critical aspect of ESL which was composition teaching.*

**Teacher 2:** *while at college, all courses were taught strictly in English but when I started practising such a stance was not attainable due to the calibre of the learners.*

**Teacher 8:** *colleges had well-structured course outlines as compared to schemes of work which are characterized by fragmentation of topics.*

What these teachers of Zambian secondary schools were facing may be interpreted as cognitive conflict. Cognitive conflict can be explained as a situation where a teacher faces a discrepancy between an old experience and a new experience in the process of teaching and teach (Piaget, 1985). As a result of cognitive conflicts, pedagogically speaking teachers may become anxious, hesitant, uneasy, vacillated, frustrated and confused as they try to find resolutions (Lee & Kwon, 2001). Therefore, teachers of ESL need to be aware of such manifestations and overcome them by either seeking assistance from more experienced colleagues or researching more around the conflicting concepts to gain a deeper understanding (Piaget, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, all the ESL teachers of Luanshya District showed awareness of how cognitive conflicts manifested and all mentioned that they resolved it through research and consultation with more knowledgeable and senior colleagues. If left unattended, cognitive conflict may cause teachers of ESL to become anxious, develop low self-esteem and ultimately fail to deliver in a classroom situation (Devine et al., 2018).

### Day-To-Day Challenges

From the pre-lesson observation interviews, the prominent challenges which teachers faced on daily basis were: a lack of teaching and learning materials, poor pupils' reading and writing skills, overcrowded classrooms and a lack of prescribed course books for English. To begin with, in almost all the schools that I visited teachers complained about not having adequate teaching and learning materials. What they had were just a few textbooks without supplementary materials. This challenge was worse, especially in the schools which were located in the peri-urban parts of the District. This can be deciphered from the following response:

**Teacher 8:** *The biggest challenge here is that we have no teaching and reading materials. We need supplementary readers. Pupils also are poor readers and writers*

From this narration, it is clear to see that teaching and learning materials are a challenge in secondary schools of Luanshya District. These findings are consistent with Mumba (2019), Mwanza (2016) and Chishipula (2016) who reported a lack of teaching and learning materials as being one of the major challenges that secondary schools were facing. Such a situation not only compromises the quality of teaching but also gives learners a negative hands-on experience concerning ESL teaching. The other challenge that the teachers reported was the poor reading and writing skills of the secondary school pupils. While in classrooms, most of them had to read with the aid of their teachers, these were learners, particularly from the peri-urban schools. This challenge can also be confirmed by the following responses:

**Teacher 6:** *Here learners just can't read on their own. They have to be helped.*

**Teacher 7:** *Here most of the learners can't read properly even if they are in Grade 12. They come from these villages where they don't speak English but Bemba.*

Such a scenario as shown above explains the continued poor pupil performance in the ESL grade 12 examination as well as the dissatisfaction that various stakeholders have had with the Zambian senior secondary school leavers (Ng'ona, 2016; Mumba 2019; Mubita & Mwanza 2020; Musonda & Mwanza, 2021; ECZ, 2008, 2015). Teacher 7 also stated the following:

**Teacher 7:** *our classes can be overcrowded at times.*

The above situation of poor reading and writing skills among learners has pedagogical implications. For example, instead of teachers advancing in the concepts and topics, they find themselves returning to the very basics of teaching elementary skill of reading and writing skills.

Overcrowded classrooms as narrated above were also one of the challenges that characterized the Zambian secondary schools (Kashinda 2020; Nyimbiri, 2016 ; Mwanza, 2016). The government-recommended pupils-teacher ratio for secondary schools is 1: 35. Overcrowding affects not only the teacher but the learners. These learners are likely to be deprived of the individual attention that they so much needed given the reading and writing challenges that they face (Mwanza 2016 ; Nyimbiri 2016). The cause of overcrowding can be attributed to the new government policy of free education from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Furthermore, most of the teachers bemoaned the lack of prescribed course books for ESL in Zambian secondary schools. The teachers complained that there were so many types of ESL books which the government was distributing in schools and most of them were shallow in terms of content. They did not know which one was to be followed. The above findings are in tandem with some of the tenets of the narrative theory which I used as my theoretical framework. For example, Fisher (1985) talks about exchanging knowledge and conveying information through storytelling. In this section, all the knowledge and information that I have presented about the in-service experiences of ESL teachers was collected through the narratives of the teachers themselves who were my respondents. This situation further confirms another tenet of the narrative theory which explains that humans are born storytellers.

## CONCLUSIONS

All the teachers had similar in-service experiences. They shared the same work routines such as scheming, lesson planning, material organization and lesson delivery. They reported teaching the same things week in and week out such as summary, composition, comprehension and structure. All teachers found a mismatch between what they learnt at college and what they taught in school. In line with these findings this study therefore, recommends that the teacher training institutions in Zambia must review their ESL training courses in terms of subject content and pedagogical content to make them applicable within the secondary school context. This can be done with the help of ESL teachers' lived experiences. The lived experiences will supply the content designers with practical knowledge of what works and what does not work regarding the teaching of ESL in Zambian secondary schools.

For lack of teaching and learning materials, this study recommend that the government of the republic of Zambia through the Ministry of Education produce and supply enough teaching materials in secondary schools so that teachers can give their learners quality teaching and learning experiences needed for improved performance.

For overcrowded classrooms, this study recommend that the government recruit enough teachers in secondary schools and expand available space so that the classroom ratio can revert to the normal 1 teacher to 35 pupils per class. This is because normal classroom experiences may help teachers to become more efficient and effective in teaching and assessing of learners.

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