

**Exploring Teachers' Experiences with the Generalist Approach of
Teaching in Primary Schools in Malawi: A Case Study of Selected
Primary Schools in Chankhanga Zone, Kasungu District**

By

Andrew John Palani

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my wife, mother, brother, sister and son for their support.

DECLARATION (STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY)

I, Andrew John Palani, declare that, the organisation and writing of this thesis is entirely my own and has been carried out at Mzuzu University under the supervision of Dr D.M. Ndengu. It has not been, nor is it being concurrently submitted for any other degree than the degree of Master of Education in Teacher Education of Mzuzu University. All reference material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Signed _____

Andrew John Palani

(Student)

Date: _____

Signed _____

(Supervisor)

Date: _____

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in selected primary schools of Chankhanga Zone in Kasungu District. The study involved thirty participants and it used the mixed methods design. However, the study tilted much towards the qualitative design. The study was guided by the General Teaching Theory. Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data while semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data. Quantitative data was analysed using a descriptive approach while qualitative data was transcribed and analysed using Tesch's open coding approach. The study revealed that teachers in the primary schools under study were not well prepared during training to teach as generalists. The teachers reported having competence in teaching most of the curriculum subjects except Religious Studies and Expressive Arts. The study also established that with the generalist approach of teaching, teachers are exposed to a wide range of knowledge, they have the capacity to handle all curriculum subjects and they can easily integrate knowledge across the curriculum. The study found out that the major challenge of the approach is lack of in-depth knowledge of all the curriculum subjects. The other challenges are high workload for teachers and lack of consideration for teachers' individual differences. The findings also revealed that teachers in the primary schools under study were not comfortable with the generalist approach of teaching. Teachers therefore opted for the adoption of the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools. The study concludes by making recommendations to stake holders in education.

Key words: Generalist approach of teaching, specialist approach of teaching

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IPTE: Initial Primary Teacher Education

MASTEP: Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme

MIITEP: Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme

MIE: Malawi Institute of Education

FPE: Free Primary Education

ODL: Open and Distance Learning

MoEST: Ministry of Education Science and Technology

MSCE: Malawi School Certificate of Education

MANEB: Malawi National Examinations Board

DTED: Department of Teacher Education and Development

MOE: Microsoft Office Excel

OFSTED: Office for Standards in Education

UCET: University Council for Education of Teachers

PGCE: Postgraduate Certificate in Education

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the study beginning with the background. This will be followed by the statement of the problem, research questions, purpose, objectives, motivation and significance of the study.

1.2 Background of the study

Primary school teachers are a central point of learning in the primary classrooms. They have a great role to play in shaping children into meaningful and responsible citizens. Considering the great responsibility that primary school teachers have, it is necessary to ensure that they are well trained in order to deliver their services confidently and competently.

There is a variation in terms of the approaches that are used by different countries for training primary school teachers as well as teaching in primary schools in Africa and beyond. Some countries use the specialist approach of teaching whereby teachers teach their areas of specialisation within the primary school curriculum. Such countries include Kenya (Bunyi, Wangia & Mangoma, 2013), Nigeria (Olakunbi, Akintomide, & Ehindero, 2012) and Botswana (Makotedi, 2013). Other countries use the generalist approach of teaching whereby a teacher has a class and teaches all subjects across the primary school curriculum. Examples of such countries are Malawi (MIE, 2006) and Zimbabwe (Samkange, 2015).

Proponents of the generalist approach of teaching in the generalist versus specialist debate that is in literature (Hay, 2004 & Russel-Bowie, 2006) argue that with this approach, the

class teacher keeps in sight an overview of the child's whole experience. In this way, the teacher can ensure that the child's experience is evenly balanced and developed according to the individual's needs. The other argument for this approach is that the class teacher can integrate different areas of the curriculum so as to give the work another dimension through a cross-curricular approach. According to proponents of this approach, this can offer a valuable teaching practice and learning platform in primary classrooms.

With the generalist approach of teaching, student teachers should be fully conversant with the foundation studies; and all the subjects that are taught in primary schools in order to deliver quality education to all learners. From this perspective, the initial primary teacher education (IPTE) curriculum in Malawi comprises ten subjects (MIE, 2006). The subjects are: Agriculture, Chichewa, English, Expressive Arts, Foundation Studies, Science and Technology, Numeracy and Mathematics, Social and Developmental Sciences, Life Skills and Religious Studies.

For a candidate to be eligible for teacher education in Malawi, he or she has to be a secondary school graduate, and has to be a holder of the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE). However, the MSCE curriculum comprises subjects that are divided into three categories (MoEST & MIE, 2013). The first category comprises core subjects which have to be taken by all students namely: Agriculture, Biology, Chichewa, English and Mathematics. The second category has two routes, thus, route one and route two. A student is required to choose one route. Route one comprises Chemistry and Physics for students who want to specialise in Sciences. Route two comprises Geography and History for students who want to specialise in Humanities. The third category comprises elective

subjects from which students can select additional subjects apart from the core subjects and their areas of specialisation. The subjects are: French, Home Economics, Additional Mathematics, Computer Studies, Bible Knowledge, Religious and Moral Education, Performing Arts, Creative Arts, Social Studies, Life Skills Education, Technical Drawing, Metal Work, Wood Work, Clothing and Textiles and Business Studies. Schools are also required to offer two periods per week of Physical Education. However, Physical Education is non-examinable at MSCE level.

This clearly shows that in Malawi, student teachers who are secondary school graduates enroll for the teacher education course with a specialised background and are trained to teach all subjects across the curriculum in primary schools.

1.3 Statement of the problem

In Malawi, primary school teachers are trained as generalists such that they teach all subjects across the curriculum in their classes regardless of the subjects which were not of their choice at secondary school level (MIE, 2006). There seems to be a mismatch between the teachers' secondary school specialised background and practice both in teacher training colleges where teachers are trained as generalists as well as in primary schools where they teach all subjects across the curriculum.

It appears that no study has been conducted to establish teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in the population under study. As a consequence, a knowledge gap has been created. This raises curiosity; hence, the need to explore teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in selected primary schools of Chankhanga Zone in Kasungu District.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in selected primary schools of Chankhanga Zone in Kasungu District with the view to explore further the generalist versus specialist debate that is in literature (Hay, 2004 & Russel-Bowie, 2006) and to bring in suggestions to improve the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools in Malawi.

1.5 Research questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1.5.1 Critical research question

What are the teachers' experiences in using the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi, and how effective is it?

1.5.2 Sub questions

1. To what extent are primary school teachers prepared during training to teach all subjects as generalists?
2. What are the benefits of the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools?
3. What challenges do primary school teachers experience with the generalist approach of teaching?
4. How comfortable are primary school teachers with the generalist approach of teaching?

1.5.3 Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives for the study:

1. To find out the extent to which primary school teachers are prepared during training to teach all subjects as generalists.
2. To establish the benefits of the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools.
3. To investigate the challenges that primary school teachers experience with the generalist approach of teaching.
4. To find out teachers' level of comfortability with the generalists approach of teaching in primary schools.

1.6 Motivation

The experiences of the researcher when he was a generalist primary school teacher, and currently as a teacher trainer, have influenced him to undertake this study. As a primary school teacher, the researcher was not confident to teach Music and Physical Education because he felt like he did not have enough knowledge and skills to effectively teach these subjects. Owing to that, the researcher developed negative attitude towards Music and Physical Education such that most of the times these subjects were not being taught. As a consequence, time and effort were devoted to other subjects.

In addition to that, the experiences of the researcher as a teacher trainer had also shown that when supervising student teachers who were on teaching practice, most student teachers were uncomfortable to be supervised in some subjects and were comfortable to be supervised in other subjects. This state of affairs instilled the desire to begin to question the level of confidence among primary school teachers in teaching all subjects across the curriculum. These initial observations spurred further questioning which culminated in the research questions applied to this study with an aim of improving quality of teaching and learning both in teachers' training colleges and primary schools in Malawi.

1.7 Significance of the study

Teachers play a vital role in the learning process of students because they are the ones that impart knowledge in them. Successful and effective implementation of educational programmes depends upon teachers that have adequate knowledge and skills through training (Ntombela, 2009) as well as positive attitudes towards the programmes (Loreman, Deppler & Harvey, 2005).

The findings of this study will be an eye opener to the education stakeholders in Malawi; hence, providing a basis for critical reflection on the current practice so as to influence trends towards improvement of teaching and learning in primary schools. The findings of the study will also add insights to the existing body of knowledge that stakeholders in education can use for the effective preparation of primary school teachers. The stakeholders include the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, policy makers and teachers' training colleges.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented an introduction to the study beginning with the background. The chapter also provided the statement of the problem, research questions, purpose, objectives, motivation as well as the significance of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the review of literature. The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section gives an overview of the generalist approach of teaching. The second section gives an overview of specialist approach of teaching. The third section reviews studies that have been conducted on primary school teachers' experiences with the two approaches. The fourth section provides a brief description of primary school teacher preparation in Malawi.

2.2 Conceptualising the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools

Primary school teaching in Malawi typically follows a generalist approach, whereby each teacher teaches all subjects typically included in the primary school curriculum. The generalist teachers prepare and plan lessons and provide necessary resources and equipment. The classroom teachers then evaluate the lessons by applying a variety of assessment approaches (Mills, 1989).

With the generalist approach of teaching, classes are usually taught by class teachers on the grounds that the advantages of having a generalist teacher outweigh those of being taught by someone with particular specialist expertise (Mills, 1989). It is assumed that the class teacher has sufficient knowledge and skills to design and deliver any curriculum subject. As OFSTED (2009) observed, with the generalist approach of teaching, each teacher has the flexibility to organise and allocate class time to various content objectives as they see fit.

The generalist class teacher system was devised for England's system of education of the poor, and was instituted not for educational reasons but because it was cheap. In the 19th

century, the basic curriculum was narrower than now such that the class teacher system was also tolerably efficient. However, once the primary curriculum expanded and the goals of primary education became more ambitious, the system's limitations became ever more apparent (Alexander, 2012).

2.3 Advantages of the generalist approach of teaching

The generalist approach of teaching is the historic staffing default of primary schools which apart from being widely perceived to offer considerable educational advantages, it was introduced on the grounds of cheapness. Hence, it remains a less expensive staffing option than the subject-led model that is used in secondary schools (Alexander, 2012).

With the generalist approach of teaching, the class teacher keeps in sight an overview of the child's whole experience and can ensure it is evenly balanced and developed according to the individual's needs. The other argument for this model is that the class teacher can integrate different areas of the curriculum to give the work another dimension through a cross-curricular approach. This can offer a learning platform which is generally accepted as a valuable teaching practice in primary classrooms (Hay, 2004).

Apart from that, it is also simpler for one teacher than for a group of teachers to ensure that the various parts of the curriculum are coordinated so as to reinforce work done in one part of the curriculum with work done in another. In addition to that, the generalist teacher can easily adjust the daily programme to suit special circumstances (Thornton, 1998).

With this approach of teaching, the child is right at the centre of teaching with the support of a class teacher who interacts daily with the child; and so, can build up a sound relationship and realistic expectations based on the individual's needs and personality (Hay,

2004). The teacher can also get to know the children well including their strengths and weaknesses (Thornton, 1998).

2.4 Limitations of the generalist approach of teaching

Thornton (1998) pointed out that it is the lack of in-depth subject knowledge that is the main weakness of the generalist class teacher model. Support for this position was found in an OFSTED (2009) survey. The survey reported that when teachers were less secure about aspects of a lesson which required subject-specific knowledge they were unable to provide students with opportunities for in-depth learning. The range of work to be covered places heavy demands on the generalist teachers' knowledge and skills such that some teachers are unable to meet these demands. It has been argued by Blenkin and Kelly (1987) that "as the scope of the curriculum widens, many teachers are finding difficulty in coping and are reducing the quality of their work as they increase the quantity" p.184.

Aubrey (1993) recognised the unrealistic expectations for generalist teachers to have detailed knowledge of all the national curriculum subjects. He noted that where teachers' knowledge is limited, they may rely heavily on the use of text book based instructions as a cover up to their academic deficiencies. Aubrey (1993) also pointed out that subject knowledge is not solely dependent on undergraduate study. He commented that evidence exists to demonstrate that teachers also develop their own knowledge through initial training and through their teaching.

Limited knowledge of the subject for generalist teachers can affect their level of confidence, which is a key issue in delivering a successful lesson. Confidence of teachers is therefore a significant factor in how well the subject is taught. If generalist teachers do not feel confident in themselves as teachers of a subject, they may not be confident enough to

teach the subject. In extreme cases, those with little confidence in their ability may even stop teaching certain subjects (Bandura, 1997).

Alter, Hays and O'Hara (2009) indicated that generalist primary school teachers are often required to teach all subjects in their classroom. These include the major subjects such as Mathematics and Literacy, as well as the other subjects such as Science, Social Studies, Physical Education and the Arts. This is a significant responsibility for classroom teachers and, as Wilkins (2009) noted, often some subjects are taught more than others depending on the teacher's confidence and background in the subject.

2.5 Studies that have been conducted on primary school teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching

Several studies have been conducted on the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools. Olankumbi et al. (2012) conducted a study on primary school teachers' comfortability with generalist approach of teaching in public primary schools in Osun State in Nigeria. In this regard, the study investigated the level of comfortability and adequacy of training with the generalist approach of teaching; as well as the influence of gender and years of experience on teachers' preference for the specialist approach of teaching. Survey research design was adopted and 254 teachers participated in the study. A questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. The result showed that 52% of the teachers were not comfortable with generalist approach of teaching. The teachers reported having competence in teaching most of the major subjects except Health Education, Music, Computer Studies and French (99%, 96%, 80.7% and 94% respectively). Furthermore, agreement of teachers to specialist approach of teaching across gender showed significant difference, but no significant difference with years of teaching experience. It was therefore

concluded that specialised subject teaching should be adopted in Nigerian primary schools (Olankunbi et al, 2012).

Weiss, Banilower, McMahon and Smith (2001) carried out a study on elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach various disciplines in self contained classes where the teacher is responsible for teaching multiple subjects. There were variations in the degree of perceived preparedness. Thus, 76% of these teachers reported feeling very well qualified to teach Language Arts, Social Studies 52%, Mathematics 60%, Life Science 29% and Earth Science 25%. Only 18% indicated feeling very well qualified to teach Physical Science.

Hilary (2000) conducted a study to investigate the extent to which non-specialist primary class teachers were able to teach Music to children. In order to answer the research questions, it was necessary to investigate the attitudes and opinions of primary class teachers. The research instruments selected were a questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews. A convenience sampling technique was used to select schools. The results indicated that while the generalist primary school teachers were capable of teaching Music, they felt less confident to teach Music than other areas of the curriculum. In-class support from Music specialists emerged as the preferred form of assistance in Music teaching.

deVries (2011) carried out a research to determine the impact of Music Education coursework undertaken in teacher training on beginning generalist teachers. The self-reported data was generated through a written survey undertaken by 112 first year generalist teachers in their first year of teaching. Results revealed that only 37% of these

beginning teachers were teaching Music on a regular basis. The following were the reasons for their decision to teach or not teach music: the presence of a Music specialist in the school; their current or recent learning of a Musical instrument and amount of time dedicated to Music Education in their teacher training courses. Other reasons were: lack of confidence about teaching Music; availability of time to teach Music when other curricular areas dominate; and access to resources and relevant professional development.

Bursal and Paznokas (2006) studied 65 pre-service generalist primary school teachers in relation to their Mathematics anxiety levels and confidence levels. They found that pre-service generalist teachers with low Mathematics anxiety were more confident to teach primary Mathematics than were their peers who had higher levels of Mathematics anxiety. Although Mathematics is compulsory in primary schools, and is actually taught regularly compared with other subjects such as Science, Physical Education and the Arts which although compulsory are not often taught regularly, educators indicate that pre service generalists teachers are reluctant to teach the subject. They also lack confidence in Mathematics, often being very anxious when faced with both learning and teaching the subject (Brady & Bowd, 2005).

Similarly, Odogwu (2000) reported that primary school teachers in most cases teach all the subjects in their classes. They have limited Mathematical knowledge because they are not specialists. In this regard, they prefer to devote their time and effort to other subjects. Igboko (1975) described the foundation being laid for Mathematics at the primary school as strong and firm. He also observed that Mathematics ranked high among those subjects which were poorly handled by teachers and greatly dreaded by the pupils. He emphasized that the status of Mathematics at primary school level determined largely its status at

secondary school level. This in turn could also determine the success or failure of it in the university.

Science educators also indicate that generalist primary school teachers lack confidence in teaching Science (Fitzgerald, 2013 & Jarrett, 1999) and that Science is taught poorly by generalist teachers due to lack of confidence to teach the subject. Fitzgerald and Gunstone (2013), in their research about generalist primary school teachers, confirmed these findings. They indicated that generalist teachers are reluctant to teach Science and if they do teach Science lessons, it is only very occasionally. Appleton (2003) research established that many generalist primary teachers lack Science content knowledge as well as Science pedagogical knowledge.

When pre-service primary generalist teachers enroll in their teacher education courses, research by Ng (2010) noted that they bring with them a wide variety of backgrounds, experiences, prior learning and related confidence in each of the subjects they are required to teach when they graduate. However, research by Jacobs (2008) indicated that generalist teachers have little prior experience or confidence in the Arts subjects and often bring with them their negative attitudes towards the Arts in the school setting. Bandura (1997) indicated that the background and confidence of generalist teachers affect how they teach the Arts subjects. Hall (1998) investigated generalist teachers' confidence in teaching Expressive Arts in primary schools in Australia. It was confirmed that many generalist teachers had little experience of the Arts subjects and were not confident in teaching them.

Runner (2011) carried out a study to explore generalist teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in teaching Dance in the curriculum and how these may be related to their classroom practice,

knowledge and context. Questionnaire and interview techniques were used. The participants were a convenience sample of 140 generalist primary school teachers of grades one to eight in two urban areas. The results showed that 67% of the participant teachers had a high sense of self-efficacy in the Dance teaching context. The remaining 33% had a medium sense of self-efficacy.

2.6 Conceptualising the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools

An alternative to the class teachers taking responsibility for the whole curriculum is the use of specialist teachers. According to MIE (2006), specialisation means becoming an expert in a particular area or field of study. The philosophy behind subject specialisation is derived from the Theory of Scientific Management which was developed by Fredrick Taylor (1856 - 1915). The Theory of Scientific Management advocates for a hierarchical structure in organisations, division of labour, rules to control the behaviour of members, impersonal relations and career orientation. The idea of specialisation is therefore based on the principle of division of labour (Kapfunde, 2000).

There are different models of specialisation at primary school level. One of the models is whereby teachers specialise to teach in a particular section of the primary school level, thus, infant section, junior section or senior section. In this case, teachers develop expertise in relevant strategies that can be employed to enhance effective teaching and learning in a particular section (MIE, 2006). For instance, learners in the infant section are at concrete stage of development. Their attention span is short. Therefore, the teacher for this section should develop expertise in using real objects and a variety of participatory teaching and learning methods such as enter-educate. In the junior section, learners are mostly in concrete and operational stages. Therefore, the teacher should develop expertise in using

real objects, diagrammatic representations, role plays and storytelling. In the senior section, most learners are in operational and abstract stages. In this regard, the teacher should develop expertise in using methods that demand more critical thinking and problem solving (MIE, 2006).

Alexander (2012) provided other models of specialisation in primary schools. These are the specialist, semi-specialist and generalist/consultant. A specialist teacher is a teacher who is an expert in a particular subject or area of a curriculum and teaches his/her area of specialisation or subject(s) all the time. The semi-specialist teacher teaches his/her subject or area of specialisation, but also has a generalist or consultancy role. The generalist/consultant combines generalist class teaching with cross-school coordination, planning and support in one or more subjects.

The idea of subject specialisation allows teachers to focus on one or two subjects. They are able to reach a wide range of pupils in their subject area. As noted by Kapfunde (2000), at school level, subject specialisation provides an opportunity for a teacher to specialise in doing a single task to ensure efficiency in production. Specialisation entails breaking each job into smaller tasks that are manageable.

2.7 Advantages of the specialist approach of teaching

The main advantage of specialist teaching approach is that it brings a high level of subject knowledge to the teaching process (Thornton, 1998). This is in line with Williams (2009) who claimed that specialists not only deliver in-depth knowledge but also uniformly plan and evaluate lessons. Alexander et al. (1992) held the view that subject knowledge is a critical factor at every point in the teaching process: in planning, assessing, diagnosing,

task-setting, questioning, explaining and giving feedback. Another strong argument for subject specialist teaching is that it focuses on teachers' in-depth understanding of the underlying concepts, principles and ways of thinking that underpin the subject in order to be effective teachers of that subject. Teachers need such in-depth knowledge and understanding in order to cope with novel situations (Bennett & Carre, 1993). As result, subject specialists use their specialised content knowledge to empower students to produce a higher quality of work (Wilson et al., 2008).

Involving specialists in a whole range of ways clearly has enormous value. Much of the current research posits that specialist teachers bring a number of important dimensions to a subject. They can challenge, enrich and deepen the learner's experience. This is dependent on schools having a range of teaching expertise and good communication between specialists and class teachers (Hay, 2004).

Specialists have definite skills and expertise which can help them to deliver their specialised area with confidence and effectiveness (Hennessy, 2000). This is in line with Hay (2004) who observed that specialisation tends to increase teacher efficiency and effectiveness which can be of enormous benefit to learners. Subject-specialist teaching also gives pupils insight into secondary school methods, reinforcing the view that the transition between the two age-phases should take place during the upper years of primary schooling (Moyles, 1992).

Emotional and values-based claims have been made about the use of the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools. Specialists show greater enthusiasm and value the

subject more highly. Teachers tend to like it because it gives them an opportunity to concentrate on that which they are most capable of, instead of being jacks of all trades. In this way, specialisation gives the teacher a sense of professionalism (Fromyhr, 1995).

2.8 Limitations of the specialist approach of teaching

There are possible limitations concerning the use of specialist approach of teaching in primary schools. Teacher subject specialisation leads to teacher isolation in two ways. First, the teacher becomes isolated from teachers other than those teaching the same subject as themselves. Second, the teacher is distanced from other subjects since they concentrate on their subjects. The result is a teacher who has a very narrow perspective of life (Botswana Gazette, 2008).

With the specialist approach of teaching, there is a risk of compartmentalising knowledge rather than integrating it across the curriculum. Otherwise, links to other curricular areas should be evident to ensure continuity of content and experience (Thornton, 1998). Apart from that, OFSTED (1997) noted that too much time and expertise can be invested in one subject; there can be over-reliance on one teacher; and class exchange can have adverse effects when the subject specialists' classes are taught by several other teachers.

Another limitation of the specialist model is the restricted time that visiting specialist teachers spend in schools. The report by HM Inspectors of Schools (1993) stated that the pattern of deployment of some visiting specialist teachers in primary schools in Scotland was too fragmented, involving too many contacts with different schools and pupils, resulting in loss of effectiveness and job satisfaction.

In an effort to develop a personality within the child at primary school, subject specialisation at primary school may put the child in a dilemma. It is difficult for the primary school pupil to adopt the behaviours of the different teachers who come with different subjects as models. As noted by Jowawa (2012), pupils have problems with emulating the different teachers who come to them with different subjects. At the same time the different subject teachers are most likely to compete for space and time which may confuse the children.

Although the specialist approach of teaching has the aforementioned limitations, it is interesting to note that the approach is recommended by some for adoption in primary schools. Masters (2009) claimed that ideally, every primary school teacher would be an expert teacher of Literacy, Numeracy and Science, thus explicitly prioritizing the development of teacher competencies in some subject areas over others. Williams (2009) further articulated this vision by suggesting that primary schools would emulate the practice of high schools, forming curriculum departments with specialist teachers, whereby the specialist teachers would hone their knowledge by teaching across year levels, and by delivering the same lessons to numerous classes within the same year level. There is also evidence of increasing perceptions that specialist skills are required for teaching primary school subjects (Appleton, 2003; Goulding, Rowland & Barber, 2002; Hennessy, 2000; Wilson et al., 2008). Others want this to be achieved while maintaining a class-teacher system (Webb, 1994).

2.9 Studies that have been conducted on primary school teachers' experiences with the specialist approach of teaching

Although research evidence is scanty, there is some literature that shows that classroom teachers themselves may support the use of specialist teachers in certain subject domains. Morgan and Hansen (2007) found that 60% of their sample of New South Wales (NSW) primary school teachers (N = 189) in Australia would prefer to have a specialist teacher in the subjects of Music, Creative and Practical Arts, Computers and Science and Technology.

Another study was conducted by Ardzejewska, Mc Maugh and Coutts (2010) which aimed at investigating the prevalence and practices associated with the use of specialist teachers in North South Wales government primary schools in Australia. The findings provided significant evidence of the use of subject specialists. In this study, 73% of principals explicitly endorsed the use of subject specialists by reporting that they had used a subject specialist while a further 6% reported they had considered their use.

Makotedi (2013) conducted a study to establish new teachers' perspectives on the role of subject specialisation in Botswana Colleges of Education and the implications of this training for the professional development of those who did not specialise in Languages. The study adopted a survey research design in which questionnaires were the main data collection instrument. The study targeted two primary schools in the southern region with a sample of twenty beginning teachers with diploma certificates in primary schools. The results of the study revealed that the teachers raised the issue of in-service development and support as a source of information on matters pertaining to Language teaching because for those who did not specialise in Languages, teaching this complex subject was a challenge

and could be highly demotivating as a result, beginning teachers advocated for specialisation in primary schools because it could allow them to teach with confidence.

In a study on the teaching of Expressive arts by visiting specialist teachers in primary schools in Scotland which was conducted by HM Inspectors of Schools (1993), it was reported that pupils generally enjoyed and benefited from the added variety and expertise which visiting specialist teachers brought to their learning experience.

Hay (2004) also conducted a study to examine the delivery of Expressive Arts in standard four curriculum by generalist and specialist primary school teachers. The study evaluated the benefits and limitations of each model. The results showed that the experience and expertise of the specialist provided an effective and desirable learning platform. This view was upheld by the specialists, generalists and the children in the study sample.

Another study was conducted by Makhila (2008) to find out primary school teachers' perceptions towards subject specialisation in north east regional education primary schools in Botswana. The results revealed that teachers advocated for specialisation in primary schools so as to teach with confidence. However, these teachers raised the issue of the difficulty of specialisation in infant classes as the pupils were very young to differentiate the subject discipline and teachers swapping classes. In upper classes teachers welcomed the specialisation and were of the opinion that the model that would suit primary school level was the subject sharing based on one's area of specialisation in teaching complex subjects such as English, Creative and Performing Arts, Science, Social Studies, Mathematics and Religious and Moral Education.

2.10 Teacher subject-knowledge and effective teaching in the context of the specialist and generalist approaches of teaching.

Thomas (1989) made three distinctions within the definition of subject knowledge in the context of specialist teaching:

“the ability of the teacher to do physically what is necessary if the teaching is to be effective; the knowledge a teacher has of what a child should learn; and the teacher's knowledge of how to teach the skill, information involved, or develop a child's interest and aptitude” (p.42).

Bennett and Carre (1993) confirmed the importance of subject knowledge to effective teaching. Teachers cannot teach well that which they do not know themselves. The key question is, do they or can they be expected to know all that the national curriculum requires them to teach? However, to ensure effective teaching and learning, all teachers should be competent enough to teach that which they are supposed to teach. If they are not, or cannot reasonably become competent, then others must teach for them that which they are not competent to teach. Anything less is unfair to their pupils.

Alexander (1994) stated the importance of subject matter knowledge by stating the following three related hypotheses: what teachers do not understand they are unlikely to teach well; what teachers do not value they are unlikely to teach well; what teachers do not understand they are unlikely to value. Alexander (1994) suggested that while teachers' curriculum knowledge in the core subjects is being strengthened, the increased attention given to these areas is often at the expense of others. He argued that a substantial deficiency in curriculum knowledge effectively negates the primary school teacher's claim to be in a position to make valid judgments about priorities in the whole curriculum for which a

generalist class teacher is responsible. Someone who knows little of, say, Music, Art or Moral Education, hardly has the right, let alone the competence, to decide what proportion of the child's total curriculum should be devoted to these areas.

Grossman, Wilson and Shulman (1989) also stressed the importance of different types of knowledge and discuss the problems inherent in teaching unfamiliar material. They suggested that some teachers try to avoid teaching the material they don't know well. This can affect selection of teaching material and teaching style, perhaps causing a reluctance to discuss a subject or answer questions if a teacher's own knowledge is insecure. They reasoned that teachers need to understand their subject in ways that promote learning.

However, such in-depth subject-knowledge, whilst necessary, is not a sufficient condition on its own for effective teaching. Dunne and Wragg (1994) outlined other dimensions of effective teaching observable in teachers' daily work and about which teachers must make constant decisions. Teachers' subject knowledge is just one of many dimensions in effective teaching. Thus, apart from teachers' subject knowledge, their effectiveness is in large part also influenced by the context in which they work and how that context is managed (Bennett & Carre, 1993). A school may have good classrooms and all the necessary teaching materials, but if teachers are not able to organise the classroom environment to promote the learning process, all the materials and classrooms will mean nothing (Hauya, 1993).

Mc Intyre (1996) asserted that all that is essentially required in order to become a good teacher is a sound knowledge and love of the subject one is teaching. Bennett and Carre (1993) conducted a research with Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) primary

students. The purpose of the study was to discover if student teachers taught their subject specialism to higher levels of competence than other students for whom it was not a subject specialism. It was found that subject knowledge for teaching was a more powerful influence than specialist curriculum courses on teaching performance.

Alexander (1992) noted that there are no clear cut answers to questions relating to teacher effectiveness and pupil outcomes between generalists and subject-specialists. In this regard, some generalist class-teachers can be more effective than subject specialists within their specialised subject or vice versa.

2.11 Primary school teacher preparation in Malawi

It is known that prior to the introduction of Initial Primary Teacher education (IPTE), Malawi followed a two-year residential teacher education programme; one year programme; three year distance teacher education programme called Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme (MASTEP); and the Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme (MIITEP). MIITEP was introduced soon after the launch of the Free Primary Education (FPE) which led to the rise of school enrolment from 1.9 to 3.2 million. It therefore became necessary to recruit over 22 000 untrained teachers. MIITEP was introduced in order to train these teachers (Susuwele-Banda, 2005).

MIITEP which ended in 2005 had limited capacity for provision of quality pre-service primary school teachers; hence, the introduction of the Initial Primary Teacher Education (IPTE), or the one plus one mode of delivery. Currently, there are two modes of IPTE programme in Malawi. The first one is the conventional two year programme and the other one is the two year open and distance learning programme [ODL] (MIE, 2006).

2.12 Initial Primary Teacher Education (Conventional Programme)

The Initial Primary Teacher Education is a two year teacher training programme targeting those who intend to become primary school teachers. The Appointments and Disciplinary Committee of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) selects students to undergo training using an aptitude test. The requirements for selection are that the candidates should possess a Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) with a credit in English; a pass in Mathematics and one Science subject (Biology, Physical Science, General Science) or its equivalent. Candidates should be not more than 35 years of age; be ready to work in rural areas and pass an aptitude test in Numerical and Reasoning Skills (MIE, 2006).

The first year which is the residential phase has three terms of fourteen weeks. Students are supposed to cover the following ten subjects without specialisation: Agriculture (60 hours), Chichewa (90 hours), English (150 hours), Expressive Arts (90 hours), Education Foundation Studies (150 hours), Life Skills (60 hours), Numeracy and Mathematics (120 hours), Science and Technology (90 hours), Social and Environmental Sciences (60 hours) and Religious Studies (30 hours) (MIE, 2006).

At the end of the first year, students write examinations set by the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB). Students are examined in all subjects. Those who fail in more than three subjects are withdrawn from the course. Those who fail in not more than three subjects sit for supplementary examinations before proceeding to the second year. Those who pass proceed to the second year. 60% of the students' grade comes from MANEB examinations. The other 40% comes from continuous assessment which is done through major assignments (MIE, 2006).

The second year is the school-based phase. For entry into the second year, students must have attended the residential course fully; must have passed end of year examinations; and must have passed continuous assessment tasks during the college-based phase. During this phase, students are attached to primary schools within the college catchment area to do their teaching practice. It is planned that a school mentor should support the student teachers at the school level. Other professionals like the head teacher and experienced teachers work hand in hand with the mentor to assist the student teachers. Besides practising their professional knowledge, students also learn how to work with parents, school committees and parents-teachers associations. Students are placed in rural schools where there is an acute shortage of teachers (MIE, 2006).

Any student who fails teaching practice in the second year does not qualify as a teacher even after passing theory examinations in the first year. In the school-based phase, students are assessed in the application of what they learnt in colleges such as preparation of teaching records and presentation of lessons. Student teachers are also expected to display knowledge of professional ethics and demonstrate skills of organisation, management as well as storage of teaching, learning and assessment resources. In addition, student teachers are also required to carry out projects in selected subjects (MIE, 2006).

2.13 Initial Primary Teacher Education (Open and Distance Learning Programme)

The other mode of initial primary teacher education in Malawi is the two year open and distance learning programme (ODL) which has two components: the face-to-face and the distance mode. For a candidate to be eligible for the programme, he or she has to be not more than 35 years of age and should have an MSCE with a pass in English, Mathematics

and any other Science subject. The candidate should also be ready to work in rural areas and pass an aptitude test in Numerical and Reasoning Skills (DTED, 2011).

In the first session of the face-to-face mode, students are taught for a period of three weeks in teacher training colleges before they are posted to schools where they are expected to teach in collaboration with experienced teachers. During this period, open and distance learners are oriented in the following learning areas: Study Skills (8hours), Schemes of Work, Lesson Planning and Records of Work (4hours), Classroom Teaching Skills (16hours) and Learner Centred Methods (3hours).

Students also learn the following: Preparing to Teach English (5hours), Kukonzekera Kuphunzitsa Chichewa (5hours), Kuphunzitsa Chichewa mu Sitandade 1 ndi 2 (1hour 30minutes), Preparing to Teach Expressive Arts (3hours 30 minutes), Preparing to Teach Numeracy and Mathematics (5hours), Introduction to School Life and Learning (5hours) and Interactive Radio Instruction (4 hours). Apart from that, students also learn: Communication in the Classroom (2hours), Classroom Management (8hours), Talular (3hours), Special Needs Education (8hours), Continuous Assessment (6hours), Guidelines to Proper Conduct of Examinations (3hours), School Management Committee and Parents' Teachers' Association (4hours), Government Teaching Service Regulations and Professional Ethics (3hours) (DTED, 2010).

ODL students are also taught through face to face mode in teachers' training colleges by teacher trainers for a period of two weeks during end of term holidays. A total of eleven subjects are covered without specialisation for a period of two years. In the first year, open and distance learners learn the following subjects: English (14hours), Expressive Arts (15

hours), Education Foundation Studies (12hours), Life Skills (10 hours), and Numeracy and Mathematics (13 hours). In the second year, ODL students learn the following five subjects: Agriculture (13hours), Chichewa (14hours), Religious Studies (10hours), Science and Technology (15hours), Social and Environmental Sciences (13hours) and Gender Responsive Pedagogy (3hours) (DTED, 2010).

In the course of training, students are given assignments and projects and they are also supervised by teacher trainers in their schools. Students sit for the MANEB's examinations for five subjects in the first year. The subjects are: English, Expressive Arts, Foundation Studies, Life Skills, and Numeracy and Mathematics. Students write examinations for the other set of five subjects in the second year. The subjects are: Agriculture, Chichewa, Religious Studies, Science and Technology, and Social and Environmental Sciences. Currently, Gender Responsive Pedagogy is non examinable (DTED, 2011).

The achievement of assessment standards through the primary teacher education contributes towards the Primary Teacher Education Certificate. This is made up of continuous and summative assessments in all subjects and teaching practice. In this regard, continuous assessment which is done through major assignments and supervision contributes 40% of the student's grade. The other 60% comes from MANEB examinations (DTED, 2011).

Having reviewed literature about the generalist and specialist approaches of teaching in primary schools, it seems that nothing or not much if at all any has been researched about the topic on the population under study. Thus, primary schools in Chankhanga Zone of Kasungu District in Malawi. This suggests that there is need for further research on the

topic along the lines of the proposed study in order to listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas.

2.14 Conclusion

With the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools, teachers teach the entire curriculum in their classes. In Malawi, primary school teachers are prepared to teach as generalists through the two year conventional and ODL programmes. Primary school teachers in some countries use the specialist approach of teaching whereby teachers teach specific areas of the curriculum. The models of specialisation in primary schools include the generalist/consultant, semi-specialist and specialist.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in selected primary schools in Malawi. The following research questions guided the collection of data:

1. To what extent are primary school teachers prepared during training to teach all subjects as generalists?
2. What are the benefits of the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools?
3. What challenges do primary school teachers experience with the generalist approach of teaching?
4. How comfortable are primary school teachers with the generalist approach of teaching?

Discussion in this chapter focuses on research design, research paradigm, theoretical framework, research site, study population, sample size and characteristics, as well as sampling techniques. The chapter further discusses the following: instruments for collecting data, methods for data collection, issues of validity and reliability as well as ethical issues.

3.2 Research design

The study used the mixed methods design. Mixed methods design combines qualitative and quantitative research designs (Johnson et al, (2007). However, the study tilted much towards the qualitative design.

Quantitative research design is based on the philosophical assumption that there is a single truth that exists, independent of human perception (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Quantitative

methods are frequently described as deductive in nature. In this case, inferences from tests of statistical hypotheses lead to general inferences about characteristics of a population. Thus, the methods that are used in quantitative research attempt to maximise objectivity, replicability and generalisability of findings. Apart from that, the methods are typically interested in prediction. Other key features of quantitative studies, including this study, are the use of structured questionnaires as research instruments and the collection of numerical data which is statistically manipulated (Fraenkel, & Warren, 2003).

Quantitative data was collected on the extent to which primary school teachers were prepared during training to teach all subjects as generalists; and their level of comfortability with the generalist approach of teaching. Quantitative research was part of this study since the researcher was interested in collecting numerical data and classifying respondents according to their circumstances using structured questionnaires.

This study also used a case study approach of qualitative research design. In a Qualitative research design researchers collect, analyse and interpret comprehensive narrative and visual data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest (Springer, 2010). Merriam (2000) states that researchers conducting qualitative studies would be interested in how people interpret their experiences; how they construct their worlds; and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.

Polit and Beck (2008) define a case study as an in-depth investigation of a single entity or a small number of entities which might include: an individual, family, institution, organisation, community or any other social unit. As the purpose of this study was to get an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in

selected primary schools, a case study approach of qualitative research design seemed appropriate as a part of this mixed-methods design.

This study used the mixed methods design in order to provide a more elaborated understanding of the phenomenon of interest as well as a greater confidence in the conclusions to be generated (Johnson et al, 2007). Another reason was to provide strengths that would offset the weaknesses of either the quantitative or qualitative portion of the study (Creswell, 2007).

3.3 Research paradigm

In this study, the researcher was influenced by the pragmatist paradigm. The origins of pragmatist paradigm lie in the two major research paradigms, thus, positivism and interpretivism. Researchers who adopt a pragmatic stance argue that paradigm differences can be used in conjunction with one another in the service of addressing a research question (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Pragmatists are unsure of one explanation of reality that is better than the other. They believe that epistemological issues exist on the continuum rather than on two opposing poles. As such, pragmatists have no problem with asserting both that there is a single 'real world' and that all individuals have their own unique interpretations of that world. For pragmatists, values and visions of human action and interaction precede a search for descriptions, theories, explanations and narratives. Thus, pragmatists study a topic in a way that is congruent with their value system (Cherryholmes, 1992).

Methodologically, at some points during research process, the researcher and participants may require a highly interactive relationship to answer complex questions. At other points, the researcher may not need interaction with participants such as when testing hypothesis or when making predictions on the basis of a large scale survey (Cherryholmes, 1992).

The pragmatist paradigm was considered appropriate for the study. This is because of the use of the mixed methods approach in a bid to provide a more elaborated understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

3.4 Theoretical framework

A theory is defined as a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relationships among variables, with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena (Kerlinger, 1979). This study was guided by the General Teaching Theory which was developed by Clarke (1970). The General Teaching Theory considers teaching as a generalised phenomenon rather than a specialised one. The theory talks about general strategies that are adopted by a common teacher to deal with all types of learners in varied teaching and learning situations.

The theory gives due significance to all variables that are involved in the teaching and learning process such as the teacher, learners, teaching and learning situation, curriculum, teaching and learning aids as well as evaluation devices. According to the theory, activities for teaching are designed and performed to bring change in the behaviour of students (Clarke, 1970).

The General Teaching Theory was considered appropriate for this study because of its tenets that fit in very well with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools. In this case, just like the theory stipulates, with the approach, teachers are trained to teach all subjects across the curriculum without specialisation. The assumption is that the teachers will acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will help them deal with all types of learners and learning situations. Secondly, the effectiveness of the approach depends on the quality of knowledge, values, skills and attitudes that teachers acquire and the way they manage other variables such as the learner, the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning situations.

Furthermore, the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that generalist primary school teachers acquire in teachers' training colleges are aimed at making them change by being competent teachers. On the other hand, teachers are also supposed to be agents of positive change in the behaviour of learners so as to achieve quality education.

3.5 Research site

The study was conducted in four selected primary schools in Chankhanga Educational Zone and at one teachers' training college in Kasungu District. The district lies in the central region of Malawi and in the Central East Education Division.

3.5.1 Study population

The study targeted 51 teachers who were in four selected primary schools in Chankhanga Zone and 35 teacher trainers at one teachers' training college in Kasungu District at the time of conducting this study.

3.5.2 Sample size and its characteristics

Thirty eight (38) participants were selected to take part in the study. Among these participants, thirty two (32) were primary school teachers, eight (8) from each of the four (4) selected primary schools. The primary school teachers were the key respondents in the study. Six (6) were teacher trainers from the teachers' training college.

Out of the thirty eight (38) participants that were selected, thirty (30) participants took part in the study. Twenty four (24) primary school teachers out of thirty two (32) responded to the questionnaires. Although it was intended to balance the male-female ratio, this was not possible because the number of female teachers who responded to the questionnaires was lower than that of males. All the six (6) teacher trainers that were selected took part in the study. Table 1 below presents the demographic variables of the participants of this study.

Table 1: Demographic variables of participants

Characteristics of participants	Number of participants (N=30)	
	Primary school teachers	Teacher trainers
Male	13	3
Female	11	3
Teaching Experience		
0-5 years	15	2
6-10 years	2	2
10 years and above	7	2

Since the study used the mixed methods design, the sample of twenty four (24) primary school teachers was considered adequate because data from these participants was collected quantitatively in the quantitative portion of the study. Moreover, a large number of participants is investigated in quantitative research. On the other hand, the sample of six (6) teacher trainers was also considered adequate because data from these participants was collected qualitatively in the qualitative part of the study. In qualitative research, a small distinct group of participants is investigated to understand the problem in depth (Merriam, 2000). More importantly, the aim of the researcher was not to generalise the findings but rather to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from participants in the selected institutions.

3.5.3 Sampling techniques

The study employed convenience and random sampling techniques. Kasungu District in which the study was carried out was conveniently sampled considering that the researcher was occupationally based in the district. The educational zone and teachers' training college under study were conveniently sampled considering their proximity to the researcher. From this perspective, it was considered easy and cost effective in terms of visiting the institutions under study.

The researcher visited the primary education advisor for the educational zone under study and selected four participating schools using random sampling technique. The researcher then visited the selected schools and selected participants with the help of the schools' head teachers. At each school, the researcher first identified the categories of interest, thus gender and experience of the participants. Eight (8) participants were randomly selected based on the identified categories making a total of thirty two (32) participants. At the teachers'

training college, the researcher also used random sampling technique to select six (6) teacher trainers to take part in the study with help of the college principal. In this regard, random sampling technique was used to select participants in order to ensure that all members had the same probability of being selected (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993).

3.6 Methods for data collection

After conducting a pilot study of the questionnaire (see appendix 1) and the two interview guides (see appendices 4 and 5), quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. Before collecting the data, permission was sought from heads of the concerned institutions. These were: the education division manager, the zonal primary education advisor, the head teachers of the selected primary schools and the principal of the teachers' training college. Data was collected on an agreed date. Quantitative data was collected first using a structured questionnaire. This was followed by conducting semi-structured interviews using an interview guide to collect qualitative data; since the study used the mixed methods approach.

3.6.1 Quantitative data collection

The structured questionnaire which was used to collect quantitative data was divided into two parts. Part one was designed to obtain respondents' personal data. In this regard, the respondents provided information about different demographic variables such as gender, experience, teaching class, and teaching subjects. Part two of the questionnaire contained a scale of items designed to elicit participants' opinions and to classify people and their circumstances regarding the generalist approach of teaching.

The structured questionnaire was used in order to collect numerical data in the quantitative part of this study (Oppenheim, 1992). The questionnaire was also used in order to collect

large amounts of information from a large number of people in a short period of time and in a relatively cost effective way. The other reason was to analyse data scientifically and objectively (Popper, 2004).

However, a structured questionnaire has weaknesses. One of the weaknesses is that there is no way to tell how truthful a respondent is. Added to that, the questionnaire only asks a limited amount of information without explanation (Popper, 2004).

3.6.2 Qualitative data collection

The researcher selected four (4) teachers from those who had returned the questionnaires (one from each participating primary school) and six (6) teacher trainers from the teachers' training college for face to face semi-structured interviews. In this case, the researcher interviewed each of the participants using an interview guide (see appendices 4 and 5) to gather data concerning their experiences with the existing generalist approach of teaching. The data that was collected from the semi-structured interviews was recorded using a phone. The researcher also took down notes as a backup in case of loss of data.

Semi-structured interviews were used in the study in order to get in-depth information about the phenomenon (Terre-Blanche, 2006). However, some of the weaknesses of semi-structured interviews are that they are prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer. Apart from that, they are time consuming. Thus, the more the number of participants, the more the time to be taken (Cohen et al., 2001).

3.7 Issues of validity and reliability

Issues of validity and reliability aim at ensuring that the findings of a study are worth paying attention to (Nunnally, 1978). To ensure validity and reliability of the instruments

and the findings, a pilot study of the research instruments was conducted, thus, the questionnaire and interview guides before collecting the main data. Two primary school teachers (one female, one male) and two teacher trainers (one female, one male) not from the study population were selected for the pilot study. After conducting the pilot study, the researcher refined the data collecting instruments where necessary to ensure clarity of the items and instructions.

In addition to that, issues of validity and reliability in the study were also ensured by triangulating the sources of data that were consulted and methods of data collection which were used (Krefting, 1991). In this case, teachers and teacher trainers were the sources of data; and questionnaires as well as interviews were the methods that were used. Triangulating methods and sources in a mixed methods design provides a more elaborated understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Apart from that, it also provides a greater confidence in the conclusions that are generated (Johnson et al, 2007). After analysing data, an external auditor was employed to review the entire study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.8 Ethical issues

Since the study was dealing with human beings, it was prone to a lot of ethical issues. O’Leary (2004) asserts that researchers are responsible for the integrity of the research process. As such, the researcher got informed consent from the participants (see appendix 6). The informed consent which was in written form, spelt out the title as well as benefits of the study. Apart from that, the informed consent also gave liberty to the respondents to participate willingly and voluntarily. The respondents were assured of respect of their dignity and that the whole process of research would be kept confidential. The researcher

also assured the respondents that their participation would not be subject to public debate (Ndengu, 2012).

3.9 Conclusion

The study targeted all teachers in four selected primary schools in Chankhanga Zone and all teacher trainers at a teachers' training college in Kasungu District. The district, the educational zone, and the teachers' training college were conveniently sampled. The four primary schools were randomly selected. The study involved thirty participants who were randomly sampled. Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data while semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data. The study used the mixed methods design and was guided by the pragmatist paradigm and the General Teaching Theory. To ensure validity and reliability of the instruments and the findings, a pilot study of the research instruments was conducted. In addition to that, methods as well as sources for data collection were triangulated. Ethical issues were observed by the researcher such as gaining consent from participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data that was collected by means of questionnaires and interviews. The chapter further presents the findings of the study. When interpreting the data, the researcher considered the most significant parts of the questionnaire and interview guide. The findings directly address the following objectives which the study was set to achieve:

- To find out the extent to which primary school teachers are prepared during training to teach all subjects as generalists.
- To establish the benefits of the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools.
- To investigate the challenges that primary school teachers experience with the generalist approach of teaching.
- To find out primary school teachers' level of comfortability with the generalists approach of teaching.

4.2 Methods of data analysis

Since the study used the mixed methods design, data analysis involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques. In this case, quantitative data analysis was conducted first through a descriptive approach followed by qualitative data analysis which was done using Tesch's open coding approach.

4.3 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data from the primary school teachers' questionnaire was analysed using a descriptive approach. Microsoft Office Excel (MOE) was the main statistical tool which was used in the analysis of the quantitative data which helped in generating frequency

tables, graphs and charts in order to find out how much of a particular variable would be present.

Of all the thirty (32) copies of the primary school teachers' questionnaire that were administered, twenty four (24) copies were returned. The researcher arranged the questionnaire data in the following categories: sex of participants; teaching experience; subjects which were being offered in their schools; subjects in which the teachers felt they were well prepared during training; subjects in which they felt they were not well prepared during training; subjects which they could teach effectively; subjects which they could not teach effectively; the extent to which the teachers were comfortable with the generalist approach of teaching; and the extent to which they agreed with the suggestion to introduce the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi.

The researcher placed a tally mark for each individual of the sample in the category being mentioned. The tally marks were added up at the end of each row and frequency tables were drawn to show the total number of individuals listed in a particular category. The total numbers in each category were converted to percentages. Graphs and charts were also drawn to show the difference in proportions among the categories.

4.4 Presentation of quantitative findings from questionnaire

4.4.1 Subjects in which teachers were well prepared during training

A section of the instrument elicited responses on the subjects in which teachers were well prepared during training to teach in primary schools. The result is presented in table 2 below. The result shows that most of the respondents claimed that they were well prepared to teach the following subjects: Agriculture (95.8%), Bible Knowledge (70.8 %), Chichewa

(91.7%), English (100%), Expressive Arts (75%), Life Skills (79.1%), Mathematics (91.7%), Science and Technology (79.1%) and Social and Environmental sciences (95.8%). Only (25%) of the respondents were well prepared to teach Religious Education.

Table 2: Subjects in which teachers were well prepared during training

Subject	Responses (N= 24)			
	Well prepared to teach		Not well prepared to teach	
	frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage
Agriculture	23	95.8%	1	4.2%
Bible Knowledge	17	70.8 %	7	29.2%
Chichewa	22	91.7%	2	8.3%
English	24	100%	0	0%
Expressive Arts	18	75%	6	25%
Life Skills	19	79.1%	5	20.8%
Mathematics	22	91.7%	2	8.3%
Religious Studies	6	25%	18	75%
Science and Technology	19	79.1%	5	20.8%
Social and Environmental studies	23	95.8%	1	4.2%

The findings indicate that most of the respondents were well prepared during training to teach Agriculture, Bible knowledge, Chichewa, English, Expressive Arts, Life Skills, Mathematics, Science and Technology, and Social and Environmental Sciences. On the other hand, the findings show that most of the respondents were not well prepared to teach Religious education.

4.4.2 Effectively taught subjects in primary schools

Respondents were asked to mention subjects which they could teach effectively in primary schools as generalists. The result is presented in table 3 below. The result shows that they could effectively teach the following subjects: Agriculture (95.8%), Bible Knowledge (62.5%), Chichewa (75%), English (87.5%), Life Skills (75%), Mathematics (79.1%), Science and Technology (70.8%) and Social and Environmental Sciences (79.1%). Only 12.5% and 45.8% of the respondents claimed that they could effectively teach Religious Studies and Expressive Arts respectively.

Table 3: Effectively taught subjects in primary schools

Subject	Responses (N=24)			
	Taught effectively		Not taught effectively	
	frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage
Agriculture	23	95.8%	3	4.2%
Bible Knowledge	15	62.5%	9	37.5%
Chichewa	18	75%	6	25%
English	21	87.5%	3	12.5%
Expressive Arts	11	45.8%	13	54.2%
Life Skills	18	75%	6	25%
Religious Studies	3	12.5%	21	87.5%
Science and Technology	17	70.8%	7	29.7%
Social and Environmental Sciences	19	79.1%	5	21.9%

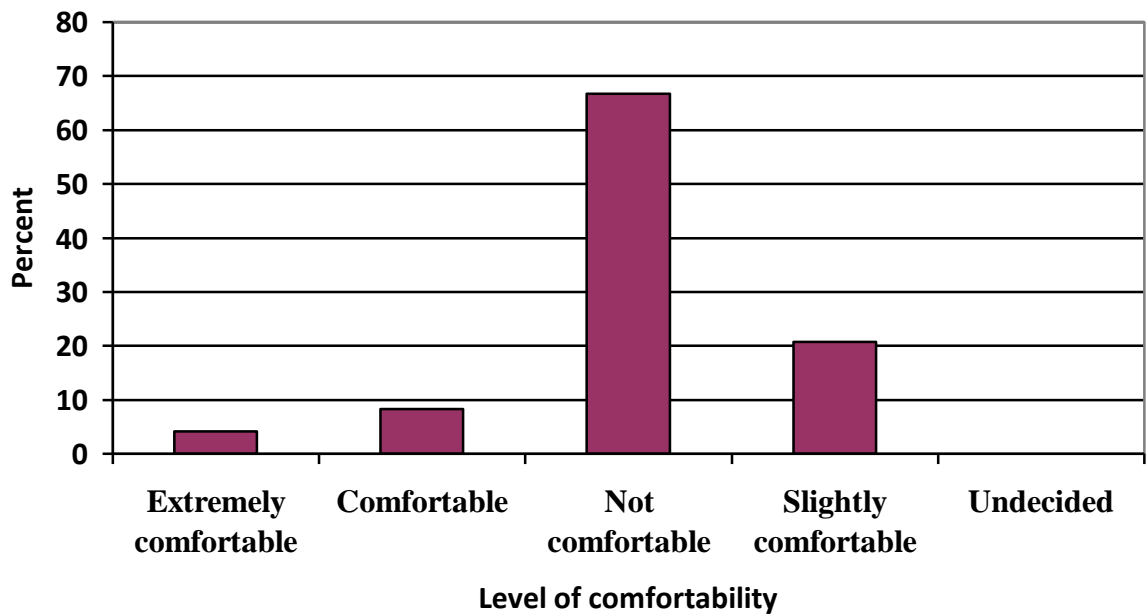
It is evident from the findings that most of the teachers could effectively teach Agriculture,

Bible Knowledge, Chichewa, English, Life Skills, Mathematics, Science and Technology, and Social and Environmental Sciences. On the other hand, the findings also indicate that most of the teachers could not effectively teach Religious Studies and Expressive Arts.

4.4.3 Teachers' level of comfortability with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools

A section of the questionnaire elicited responses on the level of comfortability of teachers with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools. The result is presented in figure 1 below. The result revealed that 66.7% of the respondents were not comfortable with the approach. The result also showed that just 4.2% of the respondents were extremely comfortable, 8.3% were comfortable and 20.8% were slightly comfortable with the generalised teaching.

Figure 1: Teachers' level of comfortability with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools

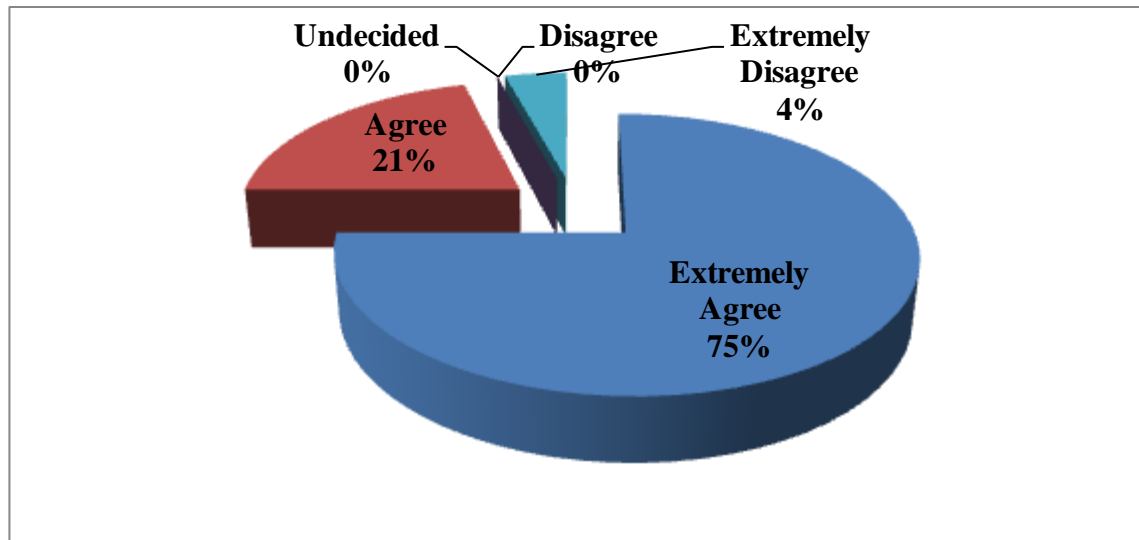


The findings show that most of the teachers were not comfortable with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools.

4.4.4 Teachers' level of agreement with the suggestion to introduce the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi

This questionnaire item wanted to find out the extent to which teachers agreed with the suggestion that there should be the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi. This questionnaire item was drawn as a follow up to the item on teachers' comfortability with generalist approach of teaching in primary schools. By implication, if someone agreed with the first item, such a respondent would be expected to disagree with the second one. The result is presented in figure 2 below. 75% of the respondents extremely agreed, 21% agreed, while 4% of the respondents extremely disagreed with the suggestion.

Figure 2: Teachers' level of agreement with the suggestion to introduce the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi



The results show that the majority of the respondents agreed with the suggestion that there should be the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi.

4.4 Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data which was gathered from interviews was analysed using Tesch's open coding approach. The interviews which involved four (4) primary school teachers were

designed to answer questions that are in appendix 4. The interviews which involved six (6) teacher trainers were designed to answer questions that are in appendix 5.

All the data that was derived from recorded interviews was transcribed. In this case, the researcher put the recorded interview into written form. This was done by listening to the recorded interview and writing down the information word by word. After the initial transcribing, the recording was replayed a number of times to ensure accuracy of information gathered. All the data that was derived from transcribed interviews and field notes was reviewed in the context of the entire interview sessions with an aim of identifying key points.

Tesch's method of open coding (Creswell, 1994) was employed to analyse the transcribed qualitative data. During the coding process, each transcribed key point was highlighted and names were assigned to them in form of phrases. The codes were written in the margins of the text. All similar codes were grouped together to become categories and sub categories. The process of reduction and regrouping continued noting which questions were being answered by which categories. Lastly, themes were created on the basis of the identified similar categories. Wanda (2009) contends that developing categories or themes involves looking for recurring regularities in the data. Table 3 below shows the themes and categories that emerged from the qualitative data analysis.

4.5 Presentation of qualitative findings from interviews

Table 4: Themes and categories from interviews

Themes	Categories
1. Exposure to a wide range of knowledge	1.1 Teachers acquire a wide variety of concepts across the curriculum
2. Capacity to handle any curriculum subject	2.1 Teachers teach any subject at any level 2.2 Suitable in schools with shortage of staff
3. Integration of knowledge across the curriculum	3.1 Flexible in cross-curricular connections
4. Lack of in-depth knowledge of subject Matter	4.1 Lack of expertise in all subjects
5. High workload for teachers	5.1 Time consuming 5.2 Tiresome
6. Lack of consideration for individual differences	6.1 Lack of consideration for the diversity of competencies and preferences
7. Preparation of teachers as generalists	7.1 Inadequate preparation of teachers as generalists
8. Barriers to adequate preparation of	8.1 Shortage of staff

teachers as generalists	8.2 Inadequate assistance from some teacher trainers 8.3 Too much work to cover within a short period of time 8.4 Lack of teaching and learning Resources
9. Teachers' perceptions towards the generalist approach of teaching	9.1 Difficult to teach all the curriculum subjects competently
10. Teachers' perceptions towards the specialist approach of teaching	10.1 A means to promote teaching 10.2 A means to maximise learning

Below is the explanation of the themes and categories outlined above. To enforce categories and to provide referential adequacy, direct quotations of some respondents are included.

Respondents mentioned the benefits of the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools. The following three themes emerged:

Theme 1: Exposure to a wide range of knowledge

The generalist approach of teaching makes teachers acquire general knowledge that encompasses a wide range of subjects. This theme yielded one category.

1.1 Teachers acquire a wide variety of concepts across the curriculum

Respondents indicated that the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools helped teachers to acquire a wide variety of concepts across the curriculum. This is how one teacher commented:

“Teachers in primary schools in Malawi teach all subjects in their classes. This exposes them to a wide variety of knowledge and skills.”

This sentiment was echoed by another teacher who said,

“With the generalist approach of teaching, the teacher has a wide knowledge of basic concepts of different subjects unlike with the specialist approach of teaching.”

The findings indicate that the generalist approach of teaching is beneficial in the sense that teachers acquire a wide range of knowledge across the curriculum unlike in a situation where a teacher teaches a particular area of the curriculum.

Theme 2: Capacity to handle any curriculum subject

Generalist teachers are trained to teach all subjects across the curriculum. Teachers are therefore expected to be fully conversant with all the subjects that are taught in primary schools. This theme had two categories.

2.1 Teachers teach any subject at any level

Respondents stated that the basic knowledge and skills that they learned in college by virtue of being trained as generalists, helped them to have the capacity to handle all the subjects in any class. This is what one teacher commented:

“I feel this approach is fairly effective in the sense that teachers are able to teach all subjects at any level in the schools where they are posted.”

This was echoed by one teacher trainer who said:

“The generalist approach of teaching is fairly effective in terms of operations as the teachers are able to handle all subjects in primary schools which have high demand of teachers.”

2.2 Suitable in schools with shortage of staff

Respondents confirmed that the generalist approach of teaching fitted in very well with schools with shortage of staff. In this regard, the teachers in understaffed schools shared workload among themselves regardless of the nature of the subjects or class. This is how one teacher commented:

“With the imbalance of teacher-pupil ratio and shortage of teachers in most primary schools, this approach seems to be fairly effective. Teachers make sure that learners are not deprived of learning any subject at any level in the event that there is shortage of teachers.”

One teacher trainer commented as follows:

“The generalist approach of teaching helps to solve the problem of shortage of teachers. The very few teachers that are in most primary schools are able to handle all subjects at any level.”

The findings indicate that in the event that there is shortage of staff at a school, learners are not deprived of learning any subject with the generalist approach of teaching. The approach makes teachers to acquire basics that enable them to teach any subject at any level in primary schools.

Themes 3: Integration of knowledge across the curriculum

The need to integrate the curriculum by cutting across subject- matter lines is emphasised in primary schools in Malawi. This helps students to connect different areas of study. This theme revealed one category.

3.1 Flexible in cross-curricular connections

Respondents pointed out that the generalist approach of teaching allowed connections between subjects across the curriculum. One teacher had this to say:

“Nowadays there is the issue of integration of ideas across subjects in the curriculum so as to reinforce work done in one part of the curriculum with another. The generalist approach of teaching is good in the sense that integration of the curriculum is possible.”

The statement above indicates that respondents valued the generalist approach of teaching as a means to promote integration of knowledge across the curriculum. This can help learners to identify links between ideas in separate fields and in the world outside school.

Respondents mentioned challenges which they were experiencing with the generalist approach of teaching. The following three themes emerged:

Theme 4: Lack of in-depth knowledge of subject matter

This theme focuses on subject matter knowledge which promotes effective teaching and learning. A good teaching approach has to enhance acquisition of knowledge of subject matter. This theme yielded one category.

4.1 Lack of expertise in teaching all the subjects

Respondents mentioned lack of expertise in teaching all subjects as one of the challenges of the generalist approach of teaching. They felt that they were not well grounded in all the subjects during training. This is what one teacher had to say:

“At college, we were only taught the basics of all the subjects as a result, some subjects such as Music and Physical Education are not effectively

taught in primary schools due to lack of expertise.”

This was echoed by one teacher trainer who said:

“The major challenge with this approach is on skills development. Teachers acquire the basic skills only. They are not well grounded in all the subjects.”

The findings indicate that with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools, teachers are often poorly equipped in terms of knowledge and skills and that this deficit is training-related.

Theme 5: High workload for teachers

The amount of work that teachers perform with the generalist approach of teaching is central to this theme. This theme revealed two categories.

5.1 Time consuming

Respondents stated that the generalist approach of teaching was time consuming since it made them to have too much of work to perform both in terms of lesson preparation as well as presentation. One head teacher commented as follows:

“With this approach of teaching in primary schools, teachers have too much work to perform which requires a considerable amount of time and effort.”

5.2 Tiresome

Respondents stated that teaching all subjects across the curriculum made them to have a lot of work to do thereby making them to get exhausted by the end of the day.

One teacher said:

“Teaching all the subjects across the curriculum makes us to have too much work to perform, as a result, we get tired and fail to deliver

lessons effectively.”

The findings indicate that the generalist approach of teaching is burdensome hence it requires a considerable amount of time and effort.

Theme 6: Lack of consideration for teachers' individual differences

The existence of individual differences among teachers cannot be overemphasised. There is one category on this theme.

6.1 Lack of consideration for the diversity of competencies and preferences

Respondents noted that the generalist approach of teaching approach did not consider differences in competencies and preferences among teachers; hence, compromising educational quality. This is what one teacher said:

“Some subjects especially the Arts are not effectively taught because not all teachers are artists. Even though the basics for the subjects are learned at college, teachers lack expertise. They just teach on the surface.”

Another teacher also commented as follows:

“We are forced to teach certain subjects which we do not like as a result, the outcome of teaching is of low quality.”

It is evident from the findings that the generalist approach of teaching which allows teachers to teach all subjects across the curriculum does not take into account teachers' individual differences in terms of competencies and preferences.

Themes 7: Preparation of teachers as generalists

Respondents stated how teachers were prepared during training as generalists. This theme has one category.

7.1 Inadequate preparation of teachers as generalists

With the generalist approach of teaching, teachers are prepared as generalists and are expected to teach all subjects across the curriculum in primary schools. Participants indicated that they were not adequately trained as generalists in the teacher training colleges. In this regard, one teacher had this to say:

“I was well prepared in some subjects but not in all subjects.”

Another teacher said:

“I feel I was only prepared in the subjects which I like but not in those that I don't like.”

The findings suggest that primary school teachers are not sufficiently prepared to teach all subjects across the curriculum.

Theme 8: Barriers for adequate preparation of teachers as generalists

Respondents mentioned barriers for adequate preparation of teachers as generalists during training. This theme revealed four categories.

8.1 Shortage staff

Respondents revealed that shortage of teacher trainers in teacher training colleges made them to be inadequately prepared. Some subjects had no specialists as result, student teachers were not learning. The following quotation illustrates this view:

“I was not well prepared as a generalist because in college there were no specialists for some subjects such as Home Economics. As a result, I graduated from college half baked in Home Economics.”

8.2 Inadequate assistance from some teacher trainers

Respondents stated that teacher trainers for some subjects were not doing a good job for one reason or the other. The following comment exemplifies this view:

“Sometimes when we asked some teacher trainers questions, instead of providing the answers, they were telling us that we would understand the issues through experience after graduating.”

8.3 Too much work to cover within a short period

Respondents stated that teachers were not adequately prepared during training to teach as generalists citing too much workload being exerted on the student teachers as the reason. One teacher commented as follows:

“Student teachers have too much work to cover in a short period of time during training. As such, little time is given to practical work which results into inadequate acquisition of teaching skills.”

8.4 Lack of teaching and learning resources

Respondents mentioned lack of teaching and learning resources as another barrier for adequate preparation of teachers as generalists. The following quotation illustrates this view:

“Some subjects need enough teaching and learning resources which are not always available during training.”

The findings indicate that teachers are inadequately prepared as generalists during training because of shortage of staff and inadequate assistance from some teacher trainers. The other reasons are too much work to cover within a short period of time and lack of teaching and learning resources.

Theme 9: Teachers' perceptions towards the generalist approach of teaching

Participants were asked to state whether they liked the generalist approach of teaching. This theme revealed one category.

9.1 Difficult for a teacher to teach all curriculum subjects competently

Participants stated that they did not like the approach because it was difficult for them to handle all subjects effectively. To them it was like forcing them to do everything despite their differences in competencies and interests. The following quotations typify this apprehension:

“I don't like this approach because naturally, one cannot be good at all subjects.

Forcing teachers to teach all the subjects puts them in a situation where they end up balancing up their efforts instead of deepening their understanding in the subjects which they like and enjoy.”

“I don't like the generalist approach of teaching. With this approach, teachers' potentials and preferences are not considered. This may result into mediocre type of teaching in some subjects.”

The findings indicate that the respondents had negative perceptions towards the generalist approach of teaching because naturally, no teacher can be good at all the subjects. Apart from that, teachers have different competencies and preferences which the approach does not take into consideration.

Theme 10: Teachers' perceptions towards the specialist approach of teaching

Teachers were asked to state their views on the suggestion to introduce the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi. Two categories emerged from this theme.

10.1 A means to promote teaching

Respondents stated that they would have loved it if the specialist approach of teaching was introduced in primary schools in Malawi. They believed that the approach could help teachers to become experts in their areas of specialisation. This could in turn help them teach effectively.

To illustrate this, the following is a comment from one of the respondents:

“The specialist approach of teaching can help to allow teachers to develop fully in the subjects which they enjoy and later help learners better.”

10.2 A means to maximise learning

Respondents observed that the introduction of the specialist approach of teaching could help to make learners learn effectively in the schools. To illustrate this, one respondent noted:

“Specialisation may lead to increased pass rate in the schools because teachers can be teaching what they know best.”

The findings indicate that respondents had positive perceptions towards the specialist approach of teaching. As a result, they preferred its introduction in primary schools in Malawi. The reasons for this being to foster teaching and maximise learning.

10.2 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed data and presented findings which were collected by means of questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data was analysed and presented first followed by analysis and presentation of qualitative data. The findings addressed the objectives which the study was set to achieve.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RECONTEXTUALISATION INTO LITERATURE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses findings of the study in relation to literature. The major findings of the study are discussed using the framework of the General Teaching Theory. The discussion focuses on how the General Teaching Theory informs the study based on the research findings presented in chapter four, and also how the study informs the theory. The General Teaching Theory has the following three principles (Clarke, 1970): firstly, teaching is a generalised phenomenon rather than a specialised one. Secondly, general strategies are adopted by a common teacher to deal with all types of learners in varied teaching and learning situations. Thirdly, activities for teaching are designed and performed to bring change in the behaviour of students.

All the information collected through questionnaires and interview guides are discussed. The themes of the qualitative findings are discussed alongside their corresponding findings in the quantitative portion of the study. The discussion of the findings directly addresses the research questions.

The first question aimed at finding out the extent to which primary school teachers are prepared during training to teach all subjects as generalists. This question ties very closely with the following two themes:

5.2 Preparation of teachers as generalists

The study has found out that primary school teachers in the schools under study are not well prepared during training to teach all the subjects across the curriculum. Evidence from interviews indicates that the teachers were well prepared in some subjects but not in all subjects during training. Evidence from questionnaires shows that out of ten subjects of the primary school curriculum, most of the teacher respondents (75%) were not well prepared to teach Religious Studies (see table1). The answer to the question is satisfactory since the essence of training teachers as generalists is to make them teach all the curriculum subjects effectively not just some of them.

Additionally, the results also show that out of the ten subjects in the primary school curriculum, teachers could effectively teach the following eight subjects: Agriculture, Bible Knowledge, Chichewa, English, Life Skills, Mathematics, Science and Technology and Social and Environmental Sciences. However, most of the teachers could not effectively teach Religious studies (87.5%) and Expressive arts (54.2%) (see table 2). It is not surprising to note that teachers could not effectively teach Religious Studies since the subject was mentioned previously as one in which they were not well prepared during training.

However, it is surprising to note that at least a large percentage of teachers (54.2%) could also not teach Expressive Arts effectively even though in the previous section most teachers indicated that they were well prepared in it during training. It can be that the teachers overlooked this subject as they were answering the question in the previous section. The idea of not being able to teach all the curriculum subjects effectively does not fit in very

well with the principle of General Teaching Theory which stresses that teachers have to deal with all types of learners in varied learning situations.

The findings are in line with those of Olakunbi et al. (2012) who studied the degree of preparedness of primary school teachers during training to teach as generalists in selected schools in Nigeria. In Nigerian basic education, teachers major in two teaching subjects even though they are given some training in all subjects. The results revealed that teachers were well prepared to teach most of the core subjects in primary schools and not the others.

The findings are also agreeing with the research carried out by Weiss, Banilower, McMahon and Smith (2001) on elementary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to teach various disciplines in classes. In this regard, a teacher was responsible for teaching multiple subjects; hence, there were variations in the degree of perceived preparedness. Thus, 76% of these teachers reported feeling very well qualified to teach Language Arts, Social Studies 52%, Mathematics 60%, Life Science 29% and Earth Science 25%. Just 18% of the teachers indicated feeling not very well qualified to teach Physical Science. The next theme is a discussion on barriers to the inadequate preparation of teachers as generalists.

5.3 Barriers to adequate preparation of teachers as generalists

Evidence based on this theme under the first research question illustrates that the inadequate preparation of teachers as generalists during training is as a result of various barriers. Evidence from interviews indicate that teachers cited barriers such as shortage of staff, inadequate assistance from some teacher trainers, too much work to be covered within a short period of time and lack of teaching and learning resources. There is need to ensure that the education that is offered in institutions is of high quality in a bid to develop a

nation. However, a nation cannot develop if teachers who teach children in the primary school years experience such kind of problems. In line with this argument, Akinbote (2007) reports that the primary school years are very important in a child's intellectual and all around development. Hence, all primary school teachers should be intellectually sound to teach the school children with diverse interests, and capabilities.

The available literature on pre-service teacher preparation in Malawi indicates that various obstacles thwart effective preparation of teachers in the country (Kunje, 2002; Kunje & Chimombo, 1999; Stuart, 2002). For example, Kunje's study on the implementation of MIITEP revealed that although the program reduced the shortage of teachers in primary schools, the quality of teachers that were produced leaves much to be desired. Kunje noted various challenges that negatively contributed to the ineffectiveness of the program. The challenges included under qualified tutors, overloading of tutors due to large class sizes, inadequate teaching and learning resources, and lack of certified teachers in schools to help in the tutoring of teacher-trainees.

The second research question aimed at finding out the benefits of the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools. This question ties very closely with the following three themes:

5.4 Exposure to a wide range of knowledge

This study has found out that the generalist approach of teaching exposes teachers to a wide range of knowledge. Evidence from interviews indicate that teachers reported having a vast experience of various disciplines as well as a wide variety of knowledge and skills as a result of being trained to teach all the curriculum subjects at primary school level. In the

Malawian context, primary school teachers are trained to teach the following ten subjects (MIE, 2006): Agriculture, Bible Knowledge, Chichewa, English, Expressive Arts, Life Skills, Mathematics, Science and Technology and Social and Environmental Sciences. Therefore, by learning and teaching all these subjects, teachers have a wide perspective of life.

Studies in line with this finding were not found in literature. However, Mc Intyre (1996) observes that all that is essentially required in order to become a good teacher is a sound knowledge and love of the subject one is teaching.

5.5 Capacity to handle any curriculum subject

This study has established that the generalist approach of teaching gives teachers the capacity to handle any subject in their classes. Evidence from interviews indicates that teachers were able to handle any curriculum subject to a certain extent as a result of the basics for all the subjects which they acquired during training. From this perspective, there is no reason for teachers to avoid teaching certain subjects in their classes because the assumption is that they can handle all the curriculum subjects effectively.

In the event that there is a problem of understaffing at a school, learners cannot be deprived of learning since the teachers that are available can still handle any subject at any level. Most primary schools in Malawi are characterised by shortage of teachers. The number of teachers outdistances the number of learners because of the alarming rate at which enrolments of schools are increasing. Alexander (2012) noted that the generalist approach of teaching was introduced on the grounds of cheapness and it remains a less expensive staffing option than the subject-specialist model that is used in secondary schools. Thornton

(1998) argues that the generalist approach of teaching helps the class teacher to keep in sight an overview of the child's experience so as to ensure a balanced and even development. The teacher knows the children, and knows what they each individually need.

Studies in support of this finding were not found. However, from this perspective, the idea of teaching all curriculum subjects fits in very well with the principle of the General Teaching Theory which focuses on general teaching strategies that are adopted by a common teacher to deal with all types of teaching and learning situations.

5.6 Integration of knowledge across the curriculum

This study has found out that the generalist approach of teaching enables teachers to easily integrate areas of the school curriculum by cutting across subject-matter lines and emphasising unifying concepts. Evidence from interviews indicates that teachers acknowledged the capacity of the approach to allow integration of ideas across subjects to reinforce work done in one part of the curriculum with another. Integration focuses on making connections for students and allowing them to engage in relevant and meaningful activities that can be connected to real life.

Students not only connect and create more real world connections in integrated classrooms, but they are also more actively engaged. An integrated curriculum also makes students to see skills multiple times. For example, instead of teaching a particular skill in just one subject, teaching that skill across multiple disciplines can give students an opportunity to see and implement it more often. The repetition of the skills being taught creates a higher level of understanding and retention of information for students in the classroom. This is in line with the findings of the study that was conducted by Hay (2004) concerning the

benefits of generalist teachers teaching Expressive Arts whereby the views of respondents centred on their ability to make cross-curricular links more easily than the specialist teachers.

The third research question aimed at finding out the challenges which teachers experience with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools. Understanding challenges that teachers experience with the approach can be helpful in identifying gaps to be addressed by the curriculum and teacher education instructional practices. This question ties very closely with the following three themes:

5.7 Lack of in-depth knowledge of subject matter

This study has found out that the generalist approach of teaching does not impart in-depth knowledge of the subject matter in teachers. Evidence from interviews indicates that teachers were not well grounded in all the subjects during training as they were only taught the basics. The importance of subject knowledge as far as teaching is concerned cannot be overemphasised. According to Lu and De Lesio (2004), unlike a specialist teacher, generalist teachers do not have to undergo an intensive teacher education in a particular subject. As a result of their limited training and exposure to this unique learning environment, they lack a certain sense of self-assurance and an in-depth understanding of the subject.

Obviously, teachers cannot teach well that which they do not know themselves. Normally, it is practically impossible for a teacher to teach all that the national curriculum requires them to teach. However, to ensure effective teaching and learning, all teachers should be

well grounded in whatever they teach. This can be done, by among other things, reviewing the teacher training curriculum; providing adequate resources to the teacher training colleges; and encouraging teacher trainers to be dedicated to their duty. There is also need to improve the educational qualifications of teacher trainers and the conditions at teacher training colleges so as to ensure that teachers are effectively prepared. Otherwise, anything less is unfair to both teachers and their pupils.

A study which ties with this finding was not found. However, this finding is in line with the observation of Thornton (1998) who points out that it is the lack of subject knowledge that is the main weakness of the generalist class teacher model. Lack of in-depth subject knowledge makes teachers to lack competence in delivering their lessons.

Limited knowledge of the subject for generalist teachers can also affect their level of confidence, which is a key issue in delivering successful lessons (Bandura, 1997). Confidence of teachers is therefore a significant factor in how well the subject is taught. If generalist teachers do not feel confident in themselves as teachers of the subject, they may not be confident enough to teach the subject. In extreme cases, those with little confidence in their ability may even stop teaching certain areas of the curriculum. From this perspective, this study informs the General Teaching Theory that its principle of making learners change their behaviours can hardly be achieved in all the curriculum subjects.

5.8 High workload for teachers

This study has revealed that the generalist approach of teaching makes teachers to have a high workload to perform in terms of lesson preparation and presentation. Evidence from interviews indicates that teachers regarded the generalist approach of teaching as tiresome

and time consuming. Before teachers go to class to teach, they are required to prepare thoroughly. For instance, teachers have to prepare and present lessons, provide necessary resources as well as equipment to learners. The classroom teachers also assess their learners. All these activities have to be conducted for all the subjects that teachers teach; hence, requiring a considerable amount of time and effort. Therefore, these activities plus other roles that teachers perform, by virtue of holding other statuses, make them to get exhausted. As a result, they fail to deliver their services effectively.

The range of work to be covered places heavy demands on the generalist teachers' knowledge and skills in all the areas of the curriculum. With the generalist approach of teaching, teachers are overloaded with ideas such that they have problems to remember all the key concepts for all the curriculum subjects in a classroom situation. This makes teachers to be unable to present lessons effectively. In line with this discussion, Blenkin and Kelly (1987) argue that as the scope of the curriculum widens, many teachers are finding difficulty in coping, and are reducing the quality of their work as they increase the quantity.

This is in line with the findings of Hay (2004) in her comparative study between generalists and specialists in the teaching of Expressive Arts in standard four whereby respondents observed that generalists had "too much on their plate" p.31. With the demands of the other curricular areas, it is unrealistic to expect the generalist to have an in-depth technical knowledge and skill base in all the areas of the curriculum. In this regard, it can be difficult for generalists to know all the subjects inside out. In addition to that, generalists can also have problems to explore creativity satisfactorily and have a deeper understanding of

concepts. The study, therefore, informs the General Teaching Theory that its principle of generalised teaching is burdensome to teachers.

5.9 Lack of consideration for teachers' individual differences

The findings of the study have established that the generalist approach of teaching lacks the capacity to consider the diversity among teachers in terms of their abilities and preferences towards the curriculum subjects. Evidence from interviews indicates that some subjects such as the Arts were not being taught effectively because not all teachers were competent enough to teach them. The idea of people having individual differences cannot be overemphasised. Teachers are different in terms of their competencies, backgrounds, experiences, prior learning, interests and related confidence.

These individual differences make teachers to have positive attitudes towards some subjects and negative attitudes towards others. No research in line with this finding was found, however, Wilkins (2009) observes that teachers' attitudes make them not to teach some subjects or to teach some subjects more than others. Again, the study informs the General Teaching Theory that its principle of generalised teaching does not fit in very well with teachers' individual differences.

The last question aimed at finding out primary school teachers' level of comfortability with the generalist approach of teaching. The following two themes provide answers to the question:

5.10 Teachers' perceptions towards the generalist approach of teaching

The findings of the study have revealed that primary school teachers are not comfortable with the generalist approach of teaching. Evidence from interviews indicates that teachers

had the perception that it was hard for them to teach all the curriculum subjects effectively as a result of differences in potentials and preferences. Hence, they did not like the approach. These findings are also supported by the results in the quantitative part of the study which indicate that 66.7% of the teachers were not comfortable with the generalist approach of teaching (see figure 1).

The findings are in line with those of a study that was conducted by Olakunbi et al. (2012) to find out primary school teachers' comfortability with the generalist approach of teaching in public schools in Osun State, Nigeria. The study revealed that 52% of the teachers were not comfortable with the generalist approach of teaching, just 1.6% of the respondents were extremely comfortable, 28% were comfortable and 17.3% were slightly comfortable with the approach. The study also revealed that most respondents wanted to teach subjects which they majored.

The teachers' uncomfotability with the generalist approach of teaching can be as result of a wide variety of backgrounds, experiences, attitudes and related confidence in each of the subjects they are required to teach. When pre-service primary generalist teachers enrol in their teacher education courses, research by Ng (2010) notes that they bring with them a wide variety of backgrounds, experiences, attitudes and related confidence in each of the subjects they are required to teach when they graduate. Teachers can also be uncomfotable with the approach because of the inadequate preparation that they receive during training to teach all subjects across the curriculum. This may strongly reinforce their strong negative beliefs about their ability in some subjects. Therefore, effective, practical, positive and long term learning experiences throughout their initial teacher education are imperative for pre-service teachers to change possible negative perceptions and to become confident teachers

in the classroom. From this perspective, this finding informs the General Teaching Theory that not all teachers are comfortable with its principle of generalised teaching.

9.11 Teachers' perceptions towards the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools

The findings of the study have established that teachers are in support of the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools. Evidence from interviews indicates that teachers had the perception that the specialist approach of teaching could help teachers develop fully in the subjects which they like and enjoy. From this perspective, teachers agreed with the suggestion to introduce the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi.

Another evidence is from the questionnaire findings whereby it emerged that 75% of the teachers agreed with the proposal to introduce the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi (see figure 2). The results seem to be satisfactory as it has also been established in literature that this approach can promote effective teaching and make teachers more competent and effective in their areas of specialisation (Williams, 2009).

The findings are agreeing with the findings of a study that was carried out by Makhila (2008). The purpose of the study was to find out primary school teachers' perceptions towards subject specialisation in north east regional education primary schools in Botswana. The results revealed that teachers advocated for specialisation in primary schools so as to teach with confidence. However, these teachers raised the issue of the difficulty of specialisation in infant classes as the pupils were very young to differentiate the subject discipline and teachers swapping classes. In upper classes teachers welcomed the idea of specialisation and were of the opinion that the model that would suit primary

school level was subject sharing based on one's area of specialisation in teaching complex subjects such as English, Creative and Performing Arts, Science, Social Studies, Mathematics and Religious and Moral Education.

The findings are also in line with those of Olakunbi et al. (2012) in a study in which she wanted to determine the extent to which primary school teachers would agree with specialised teaching in public primary schools in Osun State, Nigeria. The majority of the teachers were in agreement with the specialist approach of teaching as evident with 83.4% support for the approach. This also appears to be the conclusion by Morgan and Hansen (2007) who found out that 60% of their sample of primary school teachers would prefer to have a specialist teacher in the subjects of Music, Creative and Practical Arts, Computers, and Science and Technology. In this regard, the teachers' perceptions do not fit in well with the first principle of the General Teaching Theory which considers teaching as a generalised phenomenon and not a specialised one.

However, this appears contrary to the findings of Sawyer (2008) who argues that specialised teaching is rather outdated. In line with that argument, Botswana Gazette (2008) believes that teacher subject specialisation leads to teacher isolation in two ways: first, the teacher becomes isolated from other teachers other than those teaching the same subject as themselves; second, the teacher is distanced from other subjects since they concentrate on their specialised subject(s). The result is a teacher who has a very narrow perspective of life.

9.12 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study in relation to literature. The major findings of the study have been discussed using the framework of the General Teaching Theory. The themes of the qualitative findings have been discussed alongside their corresponding findings in the quantitative part of the study since the study used the mixed methods design.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions, contributions and limitations of the study. It further gives recommendations based on the findings of the study and areas for further study.

6.2 Conclusions

This study was conducted to explore teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools in Chankhanga Zone, Kasungu District. The study used the mixed methods design and it involved thirty participants. Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data.

The first research question aimed at finding out the extent to which teachers are prepared during training to teach all subjects as generalists in primary schools. The results of this study have shown that primary school teachers are not well prepared to teach as generalists. It has been established that teachers have competence in teaching most of the curriculum subjects except Religious Studies and Expressive Arts. The results have also shown that the inadequate preparation is attributed to high work load, shortage of staff, inadequate assistance from some teacher trainers, and lack of teaching and learning resources.

The second research question sought to establish the benefits of the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools. It has been revealed that the benefits of the generalist approach of teaching are that teachers are exposed to a wide range of knowledge, teachers have the

capacity to handle any curriculum subject and that teachers can easily integrate knowledge across the curriculum.

The third research question was to find out the challenges that teachers experience with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools. The study has established the following challenges: lack of in-depth knowledge of all the curriculum subjects which make the teachers not to teach competently and confidently; high workload for the teachers; and lack of consideration for teachers' individual differences.

Lastly, the study sought to find out teachers' comfortability with the generalists approach of teaching in primary schools. In this regard, the findings of the study have revealed that teachers are not comfortable with the generalist approach of teaching; hence, they prefer the adoption of the specialist approach of teaching.

Having sought the views of teachers in the primary schools understudy, the general picture is that the challenges of the generalist approach of teaching outweigh its benefits. It is therefore pertinent to conclude that the approach is fairly effective but not efficient. At the same time, the researcher recognises that this is a preliminary research study conducted in only four schools of one educational zone. Therefore, care must be taken when generalising the findings to all schools in the zone.

6.3 Contributions of the study

- The study has revealed that primary school teachers are not well prepared during training to teach as generalists. The study has therefore provided suggestions to policymakers and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology that can be

used for the effective preparation of teachers in a bid to improve the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools in Malawi.

- The findings of this study have revealed that teachers in the primary schools under study are not comfortable with the generalist approach of teaching because its challenges outweigh its benefits. The findings should be an eye opener to education stakeholders in Malawi. In this regard, the study provides a forum that engages the education stakeholders in critical reflection on the current practice with great potential to influence trends towards improvement of teaching and learning in primary schools.
- The study was guided by the General Teaching Theory which considers teaching as a generalised phenomenon and not a specialised one. From this perspective, this study informs the theory that it has limitations that are crippling classroom practices.
- The study has established that the benefits of the specialist approach of teaching carry more weight than those of the generalist approach of teaching. The findings of this study have therefore explored further the generalist versus specialist debate that is in literature (Hay, 2004 & Russel-Bowie, 2006).

6.4 Limitations of the study

The study was not free from limitations. One of the limitations was the use of convenience sampling technique of the target population. In this case, the researcher's judgment may not be correct in estimating the representativeness of a sample regarding the information needed. The findings of this study are therefore not generalisable to all schools in Malawi but to the selected schools only.

Secondly, the study did not involve learners, parents and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology officials whose contributions could have provided a deeper understanding of the generalist approach of teaching. Lastly, the researcher's bias may serve as a limitation to the qualitative portion of the study (Creswell, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The researcher therefore had to monitor his personal bias and feelings towards the respondents in the study.

6.5 Recommendations

- The study has revealed that primary school teachers are not well prepared during training to teach as generalists due to the high workload that they cover within a short period of time. The researcher recommends that the period for residential phase of teacher training should be increased for the student teachers to have ample time of learning in order to acquire in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and not just the basics.
- The findings of the study have also shown that some teacher trainers do not provide adequate assistance to the student teachers. The researcher recommends that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should organise regular refresher courses for teacher trainers to improve their knowledge and skills and learn about new developments. The ministry should also take into account the improvement of educational qualifications of teacher trainers and the conditions in teachers' training colleges as a starting point for the effective preparation of teachers.
- This study has revealed that teachers are inadequately prepared during training due to shortage of teaching and learning resources among other reasons. The researcher recommends that teacher trainers should embrace the culture of resourcefulness. However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should also provide

adequate resources to teacher trainers. Unless teachers begin to see the Ministry's commitment to teachers' professional support, their dedication to the organisation of effective classroom practices will remain low even if they have the skills.

- It has also been observed that teachers are not competent enough to teach Religious Studies and Expressive Arts. The researcher recommends that support services, adequate resources and professional development should be provided to primary school teachers and teacher trainers by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and school administrators. The researcher also recommends that curriculum developers should review the curricula for the two subjects to find out if they are well organised in terms of content and pedagogical strategies.
- The study has also revealed that teachers are not comfortable with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools and that they are ill-equipped in skills of approaching all the curriculum subjects. From this perspective, the researcher recommends that the policy makers and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should consider embracing the subject specialist approach of teaching in primary schools and train all teachers as specialists in order to promote teaching and learning. Alternatively, the generalist approach of teaching can be used alongside the specialist approach of teaching. In this way, the teaching of generalist teachers can be complemented by the teaching of specialist teachers.

6.6 Areas for further study

Suggested areas for further study based on the findings for this study could be:

- Exploring teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in all primary schools in Malawi.

- Examining the views of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology officials, learners and parents with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi.
- A comparative study of the experiences of teachers with the generalist approach of teaching between two educational zones in Malawi.
- A comparative study of the experiences of teachers with the generalist approach of teaching between female teachers and male teachers in Malawi.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF IDENTIFICATION FROM THE COURSE COORDINATOR



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TEACHING
STUDIES:

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwingu
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI

July 2, 2014

The Education Divisional Manager
Central East Educational Division
P. O. Box 233
Kasungu

CC: The District Education Manager
P. O. Box
Kasungu

The Principal
Kasungu Teachers' College
Kasungu

The Primary Education Advisor
Chankhanga Zone
Kasungu.

The Head Teacher
-----Primary School
Kasungu

The Head Teacher
-----Primary School
Kasungu

The Head Teacher
-----Primary School
Kasungu

The Head Teacher
-----Primary School
Kasungu

Dear Sir,

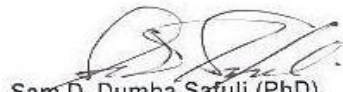
**PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA FROM SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN
CHANKHANGA ZONE AND KASUNGU TEACHERS' COLLEGE.**

I am writing on behalf of the Dean of Education of Mzuzu University to seek permission for **Mr. Andrew Palani** who is a Master of Education (MEd.) degree student at Mzuzu University. Mr. Palani has just finished **Phase One** of his programme and is about to start **Phase Two** of the programme which requires him to conduct a research which will be followed by writing a thesis.

Mr. Palani has chosen to conduct his research at any of the randomly chosen Primary Schools in Chankhanga Zone and Kasungu Teachers College and is asking your office to grant him permission to use the schools for his research programme (data collection). I, on behalf of The University Registrar, The Dean of Education and on my own behalf I would like to thank you for the kind gesture you will provide to Mr. Palani.

By copy of this letter The Head Teachers of the chosen primary schools, The Principal of Kasungu Teachers' College and the District Education Manager, Kasungu are being requested to take note of the development and to assist Mr. Palani in a way they can.

Yours Sincerely,



Sam D. Dumba Safuli (PhD).

COORDINATOR FOR POST- GRADUATE PROGRAMME IN EDUCATION

Cc: The University Registrar,
The Dean of Education,
The Head, Education and Teaching Studies Department.

APPENDIX 2: PERMISSION FROM THE EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER

*Permission Granted
S. Mumba (PEN/A)
28/07/2014
For: Ag. Com.*



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TEACHING
STUDIES:**

Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwingu
Mzuzu 2
MALAWI

July 2, 2014

*See (H.E.)
for file recording
for future use
S.M.
28/7/14*

The Education Divisional Manager,
Central East Educational Division,
P. O. Box 233
Kasungu.

CC: The District Education Manager,
P. O. Box
Kasungu.

The Principal,
Kasungu Teachers' College,
Kasungu

The Primary Education Advisor,
Chankhanga Zone
Kasungu.

The Head Teacher,
-----Primary School
Kasungu,

The Head Teacher,
-----Primary School
Kasungu,

The Head Teacher,
-----Primary School
Kasungu.

The Head Teacher,
-----Primary School
Kasungu

Dear Sir,

**PERMISSION TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA FROM SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN
CHANKHANGA ZONE AND KASUNGU TEACHERS' COLLEGE.**

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Yours Sincerely,



Sam D. Dumba Safuli (PhD).
COORDINATOR FOR POST- GRADUATE PROGRAMME IN EDUCATION

Cc: The University Registrar,
The Dean of Education,
The Head, Education and Teaching Studies Department.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Thank you in advance for accepting to answer this questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching (teaching all subjects across the curriculum) in four selected primary schools of Chankhanga Zone in Kasungu District. The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Do not write your name on this questionnaire.
- Please answer all questions honestly.
- Tick the appropriate answer in the corresponding box.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

i. Sex: M F

ii. Teaching experience: years

ii. Teaching class:

SECTION B: ISSUES ON THE GENERALIST APPROACH OF TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

1. Which of the following subjects are currently being offered in your school?

- (a) Agriculture
- (b) Bible Knowledge
- (c) Chichewa
- (d) English
- (e) Expressive Arts
- (f) Life Skills
- (g) Mathematics

- (h) Religious Studies
- (i) Science and Technology
- (j) Social and Environmental Sciences

2. Were you well prepared during training in college to teach the following subjects?

	Well	Not well
	Prepared	Prepared
(a) Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Bible Knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Chichewa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Expressive Arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Life Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Religious Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Science and Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) Social and Environmental Sciences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Which of the following subjects can you teach effectively?

- (a) Agriculture
- (b) Bible Knowledge
- (c) Chichewa
- (d) English
- (e) Expressive Arts
- (f) Life Skills
- (g) Mathematics

- (h) Religious Studies
- (i) Science and Technology
- (j) Social and Environmental Sciences

4. How comfortable are you that a primary school teacher should teach all subjects across the curriculum?

Extremely Comfortable Comfortable Not Comfortable Slightly Comfortable Undecided

5. To what extent do you agree with the suggestion that there should be specialised teaching in primary schools in Malawi? That is, some teachers should teach Science subjects, others Languages e.t.c.

Extremely Agree Agree Undecided Disagree Extremely Disagree

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS AND TIME

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

My name is Andrew Palani, a Master of Education (M.Ed) in Teacher Education degree student at Mzuzu University. I am currently conducting a study on the topic: *Exploring teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi: A case study of four selected primary schools in Chankhanga Zone, Kasungu District*. I am conducting this study as part of the course requirement. I therefore ask you to participate in this interview. Be assured that the data that will be gathered will be used for academic purposes only. Please respond to the questions to the best of your knowledge and feelings.

CORE QUESTION

In Malawi, primary school teachers teach as generalists, that is, they teach all subjects without specialisation. What are your experiences and views regarding this approach?

FOLLOW UP/SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

1. What are the advantages of using the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools?
2. What challenges do you experience with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools?
3. What are your views on the adequacy of preparation which you received during training to teach as generalists in primary schools?
4. Based on your experiences as a generalist teacher, do you like the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools? Give reasons for your answer.
5. What are your views on the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools?

THE END

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS AND TIME

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHER TRAINERS

INTRODUCTION

My name is Andrew Palani, a Master of Education (M.Ed) in Teacher Education Degree student at Mzuzu University. I am currently conducting a study on the topic: *Exploring teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi: A case study of four selected primary schools in Chankhanga Zone, Kasungu District*. I am conducting this study as part of the course requirement. I therefore ask you to participate in this interview. Be assured that the data that will be gathered will be used for academic purposes only. Please respond to the questions to the best of your knowledge and feelings.

CORE QUESTION

In Malawi, primary school teachers teach as generalists, that is, they teach all subjects without specialisation. What are your experiences and views regarding this approach?

FOLLOW UP/SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

1. What are the advantages of the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools?
2. What challenges do you experience with training teachers as generalists?
3. What are your views on the adequacy of preparation that teachers receive during training to teach as generalists in primary schools?
4. As a teacher trainer, do you like the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools?
Give reasons for your answer.
5. What are your views on the suggestion to introduce the specialist approach of teaching in primary schools?

THE END

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS AND TIME

APPENDIX 6: CONSENT FORM FOR RESPONDENTS

RESEARCH TOPIC: Exploring teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in primary schools in Malawi: A case study of four selected primary schools in Chankhanga Zone, Kasungu District.

I am Andrew Palani, a Master of Education (M.Ed) in Teacher Education Degree student at Mzuzu University. I am conducting this study as part of the course requirement. The aim of the study is to explore teachers' experiences with the generalist approach of teaching in four selected primary schools of Chankhanga Zone in Kasungu District.

I would like to invite you to participate in my current research project. If you are interested in taking part as a participant, you will complete a short questionnaire or be interviewed based on the topic which will take about 10 minutes. There are no financial incentives for participation in this study. However, the study may benefit Ministry of Education, Science and Technology officials and policy makers by providing recommendations that can help to improve the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools in Malawi.

To ensure confidentiality, your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the report. Be assured that the information collected shall be used for academic purposes only. Participation in the study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time and you will not be penalised. If you have any queries or concerns about the project, you can contact me on 0999284324 or you can email me at palaniaj@yahoo.co.uk.

Declaration

Having read and understood the contents of this consent form, please state what you want to do by ticking in one of the boxes below:

Yes, I am willing to participate in the study.

No, I am not willing to participate in the study.

Name of participant:..... Signature.....

Name of Institution:..... Date.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME