

Paron Mweetwa

How I became a teacher

Schon der Titel ist mehrdeutig. Paron Mweetwa beschreibt in diesem persönlich gehaltenen Beitrag sowohl seinen Weg der Berufsentscheidung als auch die Schritte, in denen seine Ausbildung verlaufen ist. Besonders eindrücklich sind seine Schilderungen des Alltags im College.

Die Zeit - er setzt den Niedergang der sambischen Wirtschaft mit dem Übergang zur 3. Republik (Beginn der Amtszeit Chilubas) gleich - hat seine Träume vom Leben als Lehrer weitgehend zerstört. Ein respektierter Lehrer, der mitten in der Gesellschaft steht, sein Auskommen und eine gewisse Autorität hat, das wollte er gern sein. Ein Bettler, dessen Einkommen die einfachsten Bedürfnisse nicht deckt, das wollte er nicht werden.

Parons Eltern sind tot und er lebt schon länger in der Familie seines Onkels, als seine Berufswahl ansteht. Ist es Zufall oder Bestimmung, dass er zwar für jeden der angewählten Studienplätze eine Zulassung erhält, der Erstwunsch aber aus finanziellen Gründen nicht in Frage kommt und die Zulassung zur medizinischen Ausbildung ihn erst erreicht, als die Lehrerausbildung schon begonnen hat? Paron ist flexibel genug, diesen Zufall als Herausforderung anzunehmen.

Die Schilderungen des Collegealltags geben Zeugnis von dem Druck, der durch den engen Zeitrahmen entsteht: 14 Fächer, die in jeweils neun Unterrichtsstunden pro Tag fünf Tage pro Woche gelehrt werden. Hektik und Unerbittlichkeit des Stundenplans, der neben Unterricht auch Gottesdienste und Gemeinschaftsaufgaben umfasst, werden deutlich.

Zambia today is not the Zambia we read in books and what our grandparents told us. Things have just fallen apart, economically, politically, socially and not forgetting employment. Companies have been privatized, given to private hands, and some have closed the company. People are now in street with no employment.

I still recall my ambition to become a teacher started at any early year in 1984 when I was in Grade 1, throughout my primary level I admired a teacher because of the following things:

Those days I would say Zambia was a beautiful place to live in and it was under the leadership of K. K. Kaunda (UNIP). As a child I could see what

teachers were able to own, do and not do. They could own things like vehicle, proper accommodation, good clothing, good meals; they had lovely families and their status had respect in society at that time. And being a class manager buttered my ambitions, I admired to stand in front of pupils or people and to punish pupils when they do wrong. I had all these things in my dreams throughout my primary level (course).

But as early as 1992 things started to fall apart and we had a new presidential leader F.T.J. Chiluba (MMD). Government workers were thrown in the cold, companies privatised, poverty levels rose up to about 80% below poverty.

My ambitions started to die; as I dreamed to be someone in the society but then being a teacher meant to be a beggar. Even though I wasn't one by then, I felt the difficulties they were going through. Their behaviour could tell the pain they had at heart "just like a chased dog." "Life lost a mean to them". Since then to date it is very difficult to introduce yourself as a teacher to people in the society where you are not known. People would realise the pain and the difficulties you are going through or may misunderstand you to say you want to beggy (ask) for something.

All in all I had lost my dreams (ambitions). Now I was thinking of something different to teaching. Instead I was interested to be a banker now so I was looking forward to take accounting course by then (business course). My eyes now were on bankers.

So when I graduated my grade 12 in 1996, early in 1997 I applied for 1999 intake course in Accounting at TAVETA, and then I also applied for clinic officer at Chainama College and for teaching at DLTTTC (David Livingstone Teacher Training College). I applied to so many colleges because I really wanted to do something as I was not comfortable where I was staying. Then late November 1997 I received acceptance from TAVETA but the fees were too high, my relatives were unable to pay that much for me. Later on I received an acceptance from DLTTTC for the 1999 intake and the fees were affordable. So I took the course in the following year (1999). I had only 3 weeks at the college when I received an acceptance for clinic officer and by then I had already done my paying at DLTTTC and I had already started filling the course.

It was really different to school programme in so many ways in the following things. Now we had lectures, and we students were the ones moving from one classroom to another classroom for lectures. It was interesting

and we had continues assignments now in each subject. And the continued assignment covers 50% of the examination in each year.

Even though the course had such new interesting programme it was very challenging and fearful to go through it, because I realised that what I thought was for the course was not. In mind before the course I thought that the course subjects are those primary subject course levels but it was different to what I expected, it was beyond any understanding about the course because even though the course had some names of primary subjects, we learnt something beyond that. We had 14 course subjects to clear by the end of 2 years. This was also a burden to me because at my school time at secondary I never wanted to take additional subjects. To get a certificate a pupil was required to pay (for each subject). So I took only seven subjects, but most pupils had about nine subjects, some eight, a few seven. But at DLTC there were no option subjects. It was like doubting my abilities and it has been a difficult thing to go through at the college. To me time was not there to study all these subjects at once. I really had to work hard to overcome it.

Training process

The college has three parts (terms) in a year and it's a two years course. The training starts in January and the first term ends in April. The second term starts in May and ends in August, third term starts September and lasts till December.

So when you are a first year student you have to take 14 subjects namely English, maths, social studies, R.E., physical education, agriculture, science, music, art and design, home economics, industrial art, audio visual special education and education and you are expected to clear four by the end of the first year, i.e. agriculture, art and design, music and physical education. The programme is so time tabled that you can't find spare time as a first year student.

You start your day at 05 a.m. to do some cleaning (surrounding, classroom) and watering in the garden, since each student has a garden bed to take care throughout the course and some plants from the bed are sometimes eaten by students or sold at the market. At 6.00 a.m. we go for breakfast and at 7.00 all students must be sitting in the chapel for morning devotion, then we start our lessons. There are nine periods a day, four before tea break, three after tea break and two after lunch. The night from 19.30 to 21.30 is

library studies and writing assignments. This continues through the terms in working days.

On Saturday the day starts at 06.00 o'clock for surrounding clearing and at 8 o'clock the inspection by a lecturer starts. After that students are free to go to town and anywhere. At 14.30 they have to come back. By signing they show that they are around. At 15.00 we go for campus project cleaning such as cattle stable, piggery, goat, chicken or impala according to classes. In the night on Saturday we have Entertainment (19.30 – 22.30).

On Sunday the day starts at 7.00 by cleaning the surrounding, the students are free to go to church services, but they have to sign in at 14.30. At 15.00 hours all students should be in the chapel for Sunday devotion to 18 hours when they have their supper. The Sunday night is free to prepare for Monday and to move about within the male dooms and equally for female.

At the end of the term our class tutor gives us our score for continues assignment. Then those who wanted to work for the college during the holiday by then had already made application to be approved on the closing day¹. And I remember remaining in the college for two holiday terms. This continued throughout the first year and at the end of the year you write four course subjects which you have to clear. But if you fail to clear you have to redo in the next year.

First year students start the term with teaching practice (TP) which they do for six weeks and are always paired a female and a male who share the subjects (teaching subjects). They do it within the town Livingstone as they spent their nights at the college and each student should at least have 6 critics from different lecturers. All students are expected to pass the TP the first year ends with classroom experience.

In the second year (last year at college) you are filled with the course and you have at least some time to move about within the college since you now have 10 subjects to clear by the end of that year. And during the learning days now you will have studying periods on the timetable and free periods which mean more time to yourself.

Then at the beginning of the second term you go for teaching practice again for 6 weeks, but now you are not paired and if you were in the lower primary in the first TP (i.e. into Grade 4) then you shall be in the upper

¹ Studierende, die nicht genügend Geld haben, um die Studiengebühren zu bezahlen, bleiben gerne im College und arbeiten (z.B. in der production unit) um mit dem verdienten Geld das Studium fortzusetzen.

primary (i.e. grade 5 – 7). And I remember doing my first TP I had grade 4, then second Grade 6. The second TP is very challenging because you have to teach all the primary subjects which you prepare a day before (lesson plan) at the college and have to be checked before used in a classroom. In the third term there's nothing much apart from writing the examination on the 10 subjects. The next year you wait for posting which is done before the results are out then you wait again. You have to be put on the pay roll and it takes the government one year to do this.

The main idea behind this training was simply to equip students who later become teachers with theories and practical ideas of how to handle a child in the early stages of school life. These theories and practical ideas include mainly methodology and teaching practice.

My life as a teacher at Chisamba basic school

Life as a teacher is a greater challenge which calls for kindness in the sense that we are dealing with children who are delicate human beings – when we observe the children, their behaviour is quite challenging therefore one has to be firm otherwise you can look at children as unbearable which is not the case.

My life as a teacher has been very interesting indeed, at first it seemed to be hard for me. Being with children all the time and playing with them made me know them better. I discovered that this was the main way of knowing the children and understanding their world, their needs inclusive.

Usually before beginning a new school year, it is a wise thing to sit and plan for the coming year and this is exactly what we do. There are a lot of activities that take place in a year. Academically we plan on how to improve on our teaching strategies and in this case, seminars and workshops are organized.

This is where we have different teachers (especially senior teachers) who present lessons using a variety of methods and this has been of great help.

These seminars and workshops are usually held once per two months.

There is an English saying which says “work without play made Jack a dull boy”. Not only do we concentrate on teaching techniques, we also plan for children's activities in various sport fields for example netball, football, volleyball, table tennis to mention just a few.

Preparations for all this start at the beginning of the year and after full preparations children compete amongst themselves according to groups they

are put in. In short, sport competitions are organized at school level, districts, provincial and nation, and here not only one school is involved, we are now talking of so many.

At the beginning of a week, children normally assemble under the flag and the national anthem is sung and thereafter announcements are made by the head teacher of that school, but in his absence the deputy does it. This is exactly what happens at the end of the week.

Teachers usually meet together at the beginning of the week on Monday morning for important briefings. A day has also an order of activities. Firstly pupils assemble and then go to their various classes for lessons and each teacher is assigned to a class. And we have three sections in a day. Those who start at 7.00 h – and these are the upper classes, mostly grade 6 to 9 – who end their lessons at 12.40 h; we also have lower classes in the morning, they end at 10.20 h. The second section starts at 10.40 h and end at 14.20 h. At 12.40 the third section starts (lower class) who end their lessons at 16.40 h, when school is finally closed for the next day.

As a matter of concern, usually pupils are assessed every after five days and the marks are compiled in what is known as a „Report book“. Each pupil has this special book. Then, at the end of the term, all the marks for each pupil are compiled for term and these books are given to their parents so that they may be aware of how their children are performing academically. The school is under the programme for the advancement of girls' education (PAGE) and therefore we have single sex classes. Besides we also have mixed classes. The single sex class for girls is doing extremely well and this is very encouraging not only to teachers but to the community as well. And it happened that I'm a teacher for a girl class now doing grade 6 which is surpassing the boys from other class of the same grade 6 at the end of the term. Even though girls have to work hard after class compared to boys tradition, boys have little or no work at home as they follow the activities of the father. What I have observed so far is that single sex classes in relation to mixed sex education are providing a competitive environment.