

Student Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Practice Assessment of Mwenge Catholic University, Tanzania

Ogoti Evans Okendo (Phd)
Senior Lecturer, Mwenge Catholic University
Department of Education Curriculum and Instruction, P.O Box 1226 Moshi, Tanzania

Abstract

Teaching practice is a key component of the undergraduate teacher training programme. It is during this period that the student teacher gets to translate the skills and theory learnt into reality through actual classroom teaching. The study investigated the student teachers' perceptions of teaching practice assessment. The study adopted a cross sectional survey design. 75 students were selected using stratified random sampling technique based on gender, year of study and programme of study. Questionnaires were used which had a reliability coefficient alpha of 0.84 to collect data. The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that the student teachers' perceptions towards teaching practice assessment were favorable. The findings indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in student teachers perceptions of teaching practice assessment by programme of study and year of study at 0.05 significance level. However there was a statistically significant difference in perceptions of teaching practice assessment between male and female student-teachers at 0.05 significance level. The study recommended that the Mwenge Catholic University should ensure that student teachers especially first year students and female students are adequately prepared before engaging in teaching practice sessions and the university should consider increasing the number observations made during assessment of teaching practice from one to two per teaching practice session.

Keywords: Student Teacher, Perception, Teaching Practice Assessment

1. Introduction

Each and every profession has its own training because learning to practice a skill is fundamental to professional careers. If one wants to pursue a professional career, one has to undergo relevant training in order to prepare for that profession. Scholars agree that the prerequisite for becoming a teacher is to undergo teaching practice (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). Literature has revealed the importance of teaching practice in the training programmes of student teachers for their career (Ogonor & Badmus, 2006; Kuggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Gujjar, 2010; Goh & Matthews, 2011). According to Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2008:36) the practicum component in teacher training institutions is widely accepted all over the world in Tanzania all Universities and teacher training colleges have the teaching practice component for all teacher trainees. Teaching practice serves as the most significant factor in the shaping of the student teachers' experiences (Rajuan, 2008). According to Kuggundu & Nayimuli, (2009:63) the experiences teacher trainees get during teaching practice is the most important aspects to the development of a student teacher. Teachers are expected to tailor their teaching to meet the learner's level and use their daily routine experiences and activities to help them learn (Hamdan & Hajooj, 2006). Professionally it can therefore be argued that qualified teachers who are engaged in teacher education are expected to dedicate a lot of their time and effort to develop and reinforce their students' creative thinking. This creates in their learners positive attitudes towards what is being taught, demonstrated and illustrated regardless of its challenges. The teaching practice sessions help learners develop properly their personalities and hobbies to become efficient citizens in future.

It is therefore inevitable for teacher educators to focus on student teachers' pre-service training. This training helps the trainees to acquire and develop purposeful, scientific experiences in advance. The experiences acquired during the teaching practice sessions may help student teachers develop their own potentials which will equip them to perform their future roles as teachers with a lot of precision (Mostafa, 2005). These potentials include skills in lesson planning, visualizing, class control, critical thinking, decision making, problem solving and application of learner centered methods of teaching just to mention but a few. Scholars such as (Alsaid, 2001; Bhargara & Pathy, 2011) have demonstrated that teaching practice provides an opportunity for student teachers to put into practice these skills before they begin to work as professionals. Further Niemi and Jakku – Sihvonen (2010) asserts that by actively engaging teacher trainees in school situations, they will increase their professional knowledge and enhance their learning. Consequently as a result of teaching practice, teacher trainees may discover their own intellectual resources and will make them better able to work in changing contexts. Teaching practice allows students develop a distinct attitude towards their future educational activities. Such considerations are predetermined by multiple factors (desire to become a teacher, subjective approach towards studies, their goals, results, internal processes, which influence and comprise studies) (Martišauskienė, 2007). However, the length of teaching practice for teacher trainee differs from college to college ranging from ten weeks to 15 weeks in the case of Tanzania while in other countries it undertaken for one year.

Teaching practice plays an important role in pre-service teacher training. If the teaching practice is executed rightly and effectively then it will assist in producing high quality professionally qualified teachers. Such teachers will be able to play active roles in the development of the teaching process, accommodate rapid educational changes and novel advancements in curricular and instructional activities. There is consensus from a number of Universities offering bachelor of education degree programme that teaching practice sessions for teacher educators require frequent revisions and close scrutiny to ensure that its aims and objectives are achieved and that it is being carried out appropriately. In most of the Tanzanian Universities we have teaching practice coordinators and teaching practice committees for each University that ensures the exercise is conducted according to objectives of the programme.

Teaching practice sessions of Mwenge Catholic University provides opportunity for developing a three way partnership between the university, the school and teacher trainees. This partnership is collaborative, neutrally advantageous and shares governance and evaluation of the programme to the schools and the University. Teacher trainees also gain real world experience within a school culture where they can develop a range of personal and professional attributes while participating in the teaching practice. The teacher trainee are expected develop awareness of a workplace culture and the fluidity of the rapidly changing world during the teaching practice sessions. Practicing teachers who are contracted as monitors by the University during the teaching practice sessions get an opportunity to develop professionally as they serve as mentors, teacher leaders and co-researchers to cohorts of teacher trainees, while the practicing teachers benefit from an injection of new ideas that enhance their own professional growth and development through introduction of innovative ideas and current practices introduced by the teacher trainees during teaching practice sessions.

A generally accepted view is that while being engaged in their teaching activities, teachers need to exhibit a variety of roles in the classroom and demonstrate various qualities. On the one hand, they need to make proof of their professional qualities. Professional characteristics could comprise according to Shulman (1986 in Loughran & Russell, 1997, 65) some prerequisites: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and curricular knowledge. Likewise, teachers have to be knowledgeable in their field of activity, should demonstrate good classroom management techniques, provide clear instructions or be able to plan efficiently a lesson. On the other hand, they are human beings and therefore, personal qualities surface involuntarily. Personal qualities also bear a significant amount of importance because according to Hardgreaves (1998) both teaching and learning are emotional practices. It is the teacher's responsibility to make sure that the emotional climate in the classroom is conducive to efficient learning. Teachers need to be positive, confident, motivated, patient, warm or supportive. In addition, Hardgreaves (2001, 1057) suggests that all teaching is inextricably emotional, either by design or by default. Pollard et al. (2014, 5) also states that "teaching is emotionally attached and value-laden". Therefore, one could conclude that for teachers, the personal and the professional characteristics interrelate considerably and are complementary

The teaching practice sessions in Mwenge Catholic University is organized on the basis of block system that last for five weeks and it is undertaken thrice at the end of the first semester of first year, second year and third year. During this period, student teachers are expected to prepare, plan, teach and interact with students and teachers in the course of their day to day activities in their teaching practice schools. The organization and management of the programme is as follows; cooperative schools are spotted by the teaching practice coordinators in the various regions, then students are allocated to appropriate schools in light of their preferences and social circumstances. Once the student teachers report in the schools for teaching practice, they are frequently followed up and mentored by professional experienced teachers known as monitors who mainly play an advisory role and assessed by a team of lecturers specialized in teacher education. Each student teacher is expected to be assessed once during such teaching practice and the assessment is correlated with portfolio assessment done immediately after completing teaching practice session.

2. Statement of the problem

Teaching practice is the vital component of teacher education and training because it provides student teachers with an opportunity to learn from experience in the work place. Tisher (1990) asserts that student teachers believe that the practical experience of observing expert teachers, receiving feedback, and practicing strategies are the most important factors in their growth as teachers, but there is a widespread outcry about the quality assessment procedures given to student teachers by teacher trainers during the supervisory visits. This dilemma prompted the researcher to investigate Student teachers' perceptions of teaching practice assessment in Mwenge Catholic University, Tanzania with a focus of improving the assessment procedures to achieve programme learning outcomes.

3. Research Question

1. What perceptions do Mwenge Catholic University student teachers' have of teaching practice assessment?

2. Are there differences in student's teacher perceptions scores of teaching practice assessment when categorized by democratic characteristics?

Hypotheses of the study

- 1 There is no statistically significant difference in mean perception scores of teaching practice assessment by students when categorized by year of study
2. There is no statistically significant difference in mean perceptions scores of teaching practice assessment between male and female students of Mwenge Catholic University
3. There are no statistically significant differences in mean perception scores of teaching practice assessment among Bachelor of Education (arts) and Bachelor of education (science) student teachers

4. Research Design and Methodology

The study adopted cross sectional survey design. The design was chosen so that generalizations can be made from the samples representing the population (Creswell, 2005). Data for this study was collected from 75 students in the faculty of education of Mwenge catholic University. The students were selected through probability sampling procedures that is simple random sampling. Stratified sampling procedures based on gender, year of study and programme of study. Then simple random sampling procedures were used to select 75 student teachers 25 from each year of study as a representative fraction of the total student population of 3772 students taking Bachelor of Education Arts and Science programme. .

Questionnaire was used to collect data. It is consisted of two parts. The first part- Part I had three items that solicited for the demographic information of students. Part II with 20 Likert-type items with perception statements where respondents agreed or disagreed with each perception item on a five point scale. A Cronbach alpha analysis of the reliability of the measurement of the variables involved in the study showed alpha of 0.84. These was an acceptable reliable coefficient that indicated that the instrument is reliable hence it can be used to collect data.

The bulk of the data realized by the study was managed and processed by utilizing SPSS computer Software. The analysis occurred in two stages. The first stage involved the processing quantitative data from the questionnaire administered to the primary respondents of the study utilizing the SPSS quantitative data analysis software. The responses were weighted in terms of a scale of 1 to 5 in which highest number showed highest agreement to the statement while lowest number showed disagreement to the statement for positive statements and vice versa for negative statements. During this stage, descriptive statistics which involved, means and standard deviations were used and the second stage in the data management and analysis process involved inferential statistical analysis. The hypotheses were tested using independent T-test and ANOVA at 0.005 level of significance. The study split student teacher's responses based on year of study, sex and programme of study in order to capture the variations in terms of the demographic variables.

5. Results and Discussion

Perceptions of Mwenge Catholic University student teachers' on teaching practice assessment (N =75)

The first research question was to determine perceptions of Mwenge Catholic University student teachers on teaching practice assessment. The results from questionnaire for students is analyzed and presented in Table 1

Table 1 perceptions of student teachers on teaching practice assessment

Perception statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1. The assessor found me prepared for the session	4.231	1.422
2. I was always nervous during the assessment session	2.742	1.225
3. I was confident during assessment session	4.402	0.214
4. I was satisfied with the roles played by the monitor	4.428	0.642
5. I was satisfied with the roles played by the supervisor during the assessment session	4.126	1.312
6. I always got feedback of my performance at the end of the lesson	4.427	0.034
7. The assessment made me hate teaching as a career	3.371	1.063
8. The assessment helped me to get new ideas on teaching	4.521	0.873
9. I understood how portfolio assessment was going to be done	3.060	1.351
10. I did not like being assessed, without being informed	2.312	1.523
11. The assessment helped me to be a better teacher	4.351	0.067
12. The assessor provided me with opportunity to reflect on my teaching	4.229	0.450
13. I found it difficult to manage my class during assessment session	3.029	1.562
14. I was given appropriate support towards assessment by peer observers before the monitor and supervisor arrived	4.620	0.032
15. The assessment session by the university supervisor was too brief to be observed within forty minutes.	2.516	1.054
16. The supervisor did not strictly adhere to the grading grid during the assessment session	3.742	1.403
17. The supervisor only assessed me in one teaching subject instead of my two teaching subjects	4.234	0.434
18. The supervisor seemed not competent in learner centered approach of teaching that were required during assessment	1.956	1.063
19. Most learners in my class panicked during the assessment session	1.438	1.505
20. On overall the assessment session was effective session	4.355	0.340

The results of table 1 indicate that generally student teachers' had favorable perceptions of teaching practice assessment with fifteen out of twenty items having a mean of 3.000 and above, The study further found out that the student teachers were nervous during assessment, they did not like being assessed without prior knowledge of the same, the assessment session by the University supervisor was too brief to be observed within forty minutes, some of the supervisor seemed not competent in learner centered approach of teaching that were required during assessment and learners panicked during the assessment session. These findings agree with those of Almageedi (1988) at King Faisal University who found that the teaching practice programme was effective as indicated by the student teachers' positive attitude towards it.

Student-teachers' perception of teaching practice assessment by year of study (N=75)

Table 2 student teachers perception of teaching practice assessment by year of study

Year of study	Mean	Standard deviation
1 st year	2.973	0.745
2 nd year	3.401	0.876
3 rd year	4.272	0.621

Results in Table 2 indicate that both second and third year student-teachers had a favorable perception of teaching practice assessment. However, first year student-teachers had a negative perception of teaching practice assessment slightly different from their counterparts. The differences could be explained by the fact that majority of the first year students were having teaching practice for the first time in their teaching career and therefore had not covered a number of basic educational courses before taking teaching practice. To determine whether the difference in mean scores were significant one way ANOVA was computed and the results are indicated in Table 3

Table 3. One way ANOVA results on Academic year of study differences in Student-teachers' perception of teaching practice assessment

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	sig
Between groups	.156	2	0.68	0.570	.452
Within groups	6.722	72	.134		
Total	6.878	74			

The ANOVA results show that there is no significant difference in student-teachers perception of teaching practice assessment by year of study. This means that all the student teachers were equally satisfied with teaching practice assessment regardless of their year of study. This scenario could be attributed to the fact that

all the students teachers surveyed being assisted by trained experienced teachers recruited as monitors and peers observation session with their colleagues in different years of study .

Student-teachers' perception of teaching practice assessment by gender (N=75)

Table 4. Student-teachers' perception of teaching practice assessment by gender

Gender	Mean	Standard deviation
Male	4.235	0.464
Female	3.632	0.523

Results in Table 4 indicate that both male and female student-teachers had a favorable perception of teaching practice assessment. However, the findings indicate that male student-teachers had a more favorable perception of teaching practice assessment than their female counterparts. To determine whether the difference in mean scores were significant a t-test was computed and the results are indicated in Table 5

Table 5: T-test results on student- teacher's perception by gender

	T	df	Sig (2tailed)	Mean differences
Equal variance assumed	2.116	73	0.034	.1246
Equal variance not assumed	2.327	71.410	0.032	.1234

The results in table 4 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in student teachers perception of teaching practice by gender in favor of the male student teachers at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the male students were more comfortable during teaching practice assessment than their female counterparts. These findings seem to agree with Husen and Postlethwaite (1991) who argued that males are field independent while females are field dependent. This implies that male students are not sensitive to the environment around them as compared to females. It therefore means that male student teachers were not affected by the presence of supervisors in their classes during assessment as compared to females. However, the findings of the study disagrees with those of Chireshe and Chireshe (2010) also disagrees with the above findings by confirming in their study that there were no significant gender differences in students teachers' perception of marks awarded during teaching practice as a true reflection of their performance.

Student-teachers' perception of teaching practice assessment by programme of study (N=75)

Table 6: Mean scores of Students- teachers' perceptions of teaching practice assessment by programme of study

Programme	Mean	Standard deviation
Bachelor of education science	4.210	1.523
Bachelor of education arts	4.154	1.644

The results of table 6 show the mean scores of student teachers' perception of teaching practice assessment by programme of study. The results indicate that the Bachelor of Education science had a more favorable perception than Bachelor of education arts. To determine whether the difference in mean scores were significant, one way ANOVA was computed and the results are indicated in Table 7

Table 7: One way ANOVA results Mean scores of Students- teachers' perceptions of teaching practice assessment by programme of study

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	sig
Between groups	.136	2	0.79	0.754	.734
Within groups	8.361	72	.410		
Total	8.497	74			

The ANOVA results show that there is no significant difference in student-teachers perception of teaching practice assessment by programme of study. This means that all the student teachers were equally satisfied with teaching practice assessment regardless of their programme of study. This scenario could be attributed to the fact that all the students teachers surveyed were undergoing similar training programme to make them to be effective teachers.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations of the Study

Conclusions

Mwenge Catholic University student-teachers have a favorable positive perception of teaching practice assessment. Although, some student teachers were nervous during assessment, they did not like being assessed without prior knowledge of the same, the assessment session by the University supervisor was too brief to be observed within forty minutes, some of the supervisor seemed not competent in learner centered approach of teaching that were required during assessment and learners panicked during the assessment session.

The study concluded that both second and third year student-teachers of Mwenge catholic University have a favorable perception of teaching practice assessment conducted by the University. However, first year student-

teachers had a negative perception of teaching practice assessment slightly different from their counterparts.

The study concluded that there is a statistically significant difference between Mwenge Catholic University's male and female student teachers' perception of the teaching practice assessment sessions. With male students having a favorable perception while the female counterpart have a predominantly negative perception.

The study further concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in Mwenge Catholic University student teachers' perception of teaching practice assessment by year of study. And finally the study concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in Mwenge Catholic University student teachers' perception of teaching practice assessment by programme of study

Recommendations of the study

1. The University should ensure that student teachers especially first year students and female students are adequately prepared before engaging in teaching practice sessions. This can be achieved by ensuring that during the orientation session the students are adequately informed of what they are expected to do during the teaching practice session.
2. The University should consider increasing the number observations made during assessment of teaching practice from one to two per teaching practice session. This will enable the monitors and supervisors to observe the students in both teaching subjects during the session and consequently enable the student teachers to acquire the necessary skills during the teaching practice sessions.
3. The University should ensure that all the monitors and university teaching staff participating in teaching practice assessment are well grounded in learner centred method of teaching before they are engaged in the teaching practice supervision exercise. This may be enhanced through development of a comprehensive teacher professional programme for all University lecturers without educational background.
4. Student teachers need to be informed of the assessment programme before the actual assessment session to prepare them adequately for the assessment of the teaching practice.

References

- Al-magableh, A.M.F 2010. An Evaluation of English Practicum at Yormuk University from Cooperative Teachers and Student- Teachers Perspectives. *International Journal of Language Studies(IJLS)*, vol.4(4),263-300
- Almageedi, H. 1988. An Evaluation of the Practicum in College of Education at King Faisal University. *Journal of Arab University Union*, 33,169-222.
- Almikhailafi, M. 2005. A Suggested Programme for Developing Practicum in the School of Education at Ebb University. *University Researcher*, 8,133-154
- Alnaji, H. 2000. An Evaluation of Pre-service Practicum at Mu'tah University from Graduates Perspectives. *Mu'tah for Studies and Research*,15 (3),179-205
- Alsa'eed, S. 2006. Practicum and Preparing Future Teachers. *Studies in Curriculum and Instruction*, 114,195-239.
- Alsaid, M. 2001. Efficiency of a Suggested Program for Developing Art Education Student- Teachers' Critical Thinking and its Influence on the Outcomes of the Teaching Process. *Studies in Curricula and Instruction*, 71, 83-221
- Bhargara A. & Pathy M. 2011. Perception of Students
- Bishir, Y. 2005. A Suggested Educational Perspective for Teacher Education and Development in the School of Education at University of Ebb. *University Researcher*, 8,93124
- Chen, J. & Mu, Z. 2010. The Cross-National Comparison of Pre-service Mathematics Teacher Education and Curriculum Structure. *Journal of Mathematics Education* vol. 3(1) 119-136.
- Chireshe, R. & Chireshe, E 2010. Student Teachers Perception of Teaching Practice Assessment. *South African Journal of Mathematics Education* Vol. 3(1) 119-136.
- Diab, T. 1999. Student- Teachers Attitudes towards Practicum at Jordan University: An Evaluative Study. *Divvasat, Education Sciences*, 26(1), 142-164
- Hamdan, M & Jahjoo A.Y. 2006. A Suggested Model for Developing Practicum for Students of Primary Cycle Department in the School of Education at Alagsa University. *Studies in Curricula and Instruction*, 114,195-239.
- Hornby, A.S (Ed.). 2006. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary International Students Edition (7th ed)*. London: Oxford University Press
- Husen, T & Postlethwaite, T.N. 1991. Cognitive Styles. In *The international encyclopedia of education* vol.2 pp. 868871 New York pergamon press
- Idris, N., Cheong, L. S., Nor, M. M., Razak, A. Z. A., & Saad, R. M. 2006. The Professional Preparation of

- Malaysia Teachers in the Implementation of Teaching and Learning Mathematics and Science in English. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education* 3 (2): 101110
- Jahin & Alexander 2006. Saudi EFL Student Teachers' Beliefs about Language Learning: The Impact of a Preservice Teacher Education Programme. *Studies in Curriculum and Instruction*, 110, 1-30.
- Khasawneh, M. 2002. Efficiency of Maths Cooperative Teacher in Developing Student Teachers Performance. *Mu'tah for Studies and Research*, 17(5):113-138.
- Qazi W., Rawat K.J., Sharjee M. Y., Devi M. S. 2008. Teacher Perception about Implementation Strategy of B.Ed Teaching Practice in Real School. *The S.U. Journal of Education*. Vol. XXXVIII, 2008-09, Pp. 54-76
- Wachanga S. W., Keraro F. N. & Githua B. N. 2001. Towards the Improvement of Teaching Practice: The Role of Practice Schools and University Supervisors from Students' Perspectives. *Journal of Education and Human Recourses* 1 (1): 90-104
- Wilson, S. M., Floden R. E. & Ferrini-Mundy J. 2001 *Teacher Preparation Research: Current Knowledge, Gaps, And Recommendations center For the Study of Teaching and Policy University of Washington*