

Prospective Teachers Proclivities in Regard to Teaching Practice as Part of Teacher Training

MERCY WANJA NJAGI

Department of Education Chuka University

mwanja@chuka.ac.ke

Abstract – Teaching practice occupies a key position in initial teacher education programme. Teaching practice provides the prospective teacher with practical experience in a school to put theories into practice. In order to achieve the standards required for qualified teacher status, a student teacher is required to undertake teaching practice at least one school term in Kenya hence teaching practice is an obligatory requirement, transformative experience and of great importance to trainee teacher. During the teaching practice the student teacher applies the fundamental procedures, techniques and methods of teaching, even the philosophy of education learned theoretically in the classroom. Thus the trainee teacher undergoes practical use of teaching methods, strategies, techniques and exercise of different activities of daily school life. The purpose of the study was to investigate the student teacher readiness for teaching practice and experience during teaching practice. The study also explored the student teachers disposition of teaching profession after teaching practice. The study adopted descriptive research design. The participants were purposively sampled from fourth year Bachelor of Education students from universities in Kenya where a sample of 132 students was used. The finding of this research revealed that teacher preparation is adequate, student teachers face challenges during teaching practice and that majority intend to join teaching profession after the course. The findings of the study may provide added knowledge to teacher trainer to prepare, adjust and improve on their primary responsibility of preparing the prospective teachers. The findings may help teacher education institutions to understand diversity, intensity, complicity and richness of teaching practice as an integral component of teacher education programme in order to provide quality and enriching teaching practice session to train competitive educators.

Keywords – Teaching Practice, Student Teacher, Initial Teacher Education and Prospective Teacher.

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching practice is a period that trainee teacher spends teaching and carrying out other activities at a school as part of his or her training under supervision. Under teaching practice activity, the student teachers are placed in schools in order to gain teaching experience. Teaching practice represents the range of experiences to which student teachers are exposed when they work in classrooms (Marais & Meier, 2004). Teaching practice provide trainee teacher with an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of educational principles and their implication for learning (Akbar, 2002). The activity of teaching practice enable the student teacher to sagaciously put the profession of teaching into practice through applying academic knowledge in a

real school situation. Since teaching practice is an immanent component of teacher training and play a significant role in the preparation of prospective teachers then it must be designed to enable the student teacher to ac-

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Teaching practice expose the student teacher to the realities of effective teaching, help them try out methods of teaching and gain practical classroom experience under expert supervision (Osuala, 2004). According to Caires and Almeida (2005), teaching practice represents a unique opportunity for the development and consolidation of a significant variety of knowledge and skills for the vast majority of student teachers. Teaching practice also assists to develop teaching skills according to the discipline and levels that theory will be teaching (Koc, 2011). Hassan (2006) asserts that teaching practice is a period which provides opportunities for student teachers to secure experience in observing and participating in diverse educational activities of teaching in the school. Teaching practice provide the student teacher with practical experience in school to overcome the problems of discipline and to develop desirable professional interests, attitudes and ideas relative to teaching profession (Akbar, 2002). In teaching practice, trainee teachers have the opportunity to integrate different types of knowledge and use them in specific school contexts. Perry (2004) states that teaching practice is aimed at inducting student teachers more fully into professional work of teachers.

To carry out a successful teaching practice exercise, the student teacher should have the necessary support to kick off (Kamakia, 2010). Initial preparation for the trainee teacher is vital since actual application of content and pedagogical knowledge in classroom environment can be very different from the information (theoretical knowledge) provided in teacher preparation programme (Laut, 1999). Mannathoko (2013) noted that trainee teacher should be given extensive preparation on the pedagogy aspect for each specific subject before engaging in teaching practice for knowledge of content is critical factor in teaching-learning process.

For teaching efficacy, the student teacher need to be acquainted with different teaching techniques, methods, strategies, classroom management skills and the correct preparation of professional documents such as schemes of work, lesson plan and record of work. The student teacher need to be exposed to the expectations of the teaching practice by engaging them in microteaching which is a lesson demonstration that involves teaching peers or colleagues. Microteaching play a vital role in developing student teacher knowledge, skills and professional attitudes as an educator and more so increases the self-confidence, improve the in-class teaching performances, and develops the classroom management skills (Deniz, 2010). Microteaching is designed to improve teaching skills such as questioning, reinforcement, stimulus variation, set induction and also provide opportunity for immediate feedback on shortcomings and strengths from the trainer.

For meaningful teaching practice session, the prospective teacher requires proper orientation that provides guidance on the requirements and process of teaching practice as a whole. The student teachers are explained to the code of conduct, professional ethics, duties and responsibilities in order for them to handle themselves in a professional manner. The student teachers are given input during orientation on areas they need to focus on such as pedagogy, class management, professional documents and school matters.

Meanwell and Kleiner (2013) revealed that there is a range of positive and negative emotions experienced by first-time teachers. According to Perry (2004), teaching practice creates a mixture of anticipation, anxiety, excitement and apprehension in the student teachers as they commence their teaching practice. First-time teachers have a lot of anxiety regarding how they will perform in classrooms (Jensen, Sandoval-Hernandez, Knoll & Gonzalez, 2012). The practical situation in the classroom is one which is full of complexity, uncertainty, instability, singularity and one where conflicting values exist (Perez-Gomez & Gimeno, 1988). Bhargava (2009) further states that teaching practice has demands that constitute a heavy workload which may exhaust the student teachers. As a result of these demands, teaching practice is seen by many student teachers as the most stressful component of the undergraduate teacher curriculum. The trainee teachers have to struggle with the emotional stress generated by the realities of classroom teaching such as learner behaviour and time constraints as well as the demands of academic life (Wagenaar, 2005). The student teacher experiences create a number of worries and anxieties, sometimes resulting in high levels of stress and restlessness (Turan 2011). Tuli and File (2009) found out that teaching practice allows trainee teachers to discover their abilities and creativities that help them in their future teaching processes.

When student teachers interact with realities of the classroom and the broader school environment they develop various beliefs and attitude about the teaching profession. According to Komba and Kira (2013), the trainee teachers evaluate their own teaching experiences through interactions with teachers and lecturers and, through self-reflection, implement a variety with view to bringing about meaningful learning. The teaching practice experience plays an important role in either making or breaking a student teachers interest in teaching profession and may also stimulate the desire and love for the teaching profession (Nair & Ghanaguru, 2017). Also, Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009), on their study on postgraduate education students in the Vaal triangle found out that some students maintained the same attitude while others felt that teaching was not such a bad thing after all. They also found out that teaching experiences negatively influenced some student teachers perception and attitude towards the teaching profession. Teaching practice is one of the most important and challenging aspects of teacher education programme because it provides relevant practical experience for prospective teachers (Ramsey, 2000). Hence teaching practice is an important contributing factor towards the quality of teacher education programme thus it should

encompass proper preparation, empowerment and participation.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching practice is an activity that plays a significant role in the preparation of prospective teachers in which educational theory and practice are integrated in teaching. In Kenya, teaching practice is mandatory ethical requirement for professional teachers at all levels in that before student teachers graduate from teacher education program, they need to be equipped with adequate experience working in schools. However despite the importance of teaching practice, it can be most challenging and exciting exercise to the trainee teacher. Thus due attention should be given to teaching practice in order to inculcate the professional traits in prospective teachers. Hence this study explored readiness and experiences of student teachers during teaching practice in order to provide insight to teacher trainers and institution to effectively prepare trainee teachers to acquire professional knowledge and competence as teachers.

A. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the student teachers readiness for teaching practice, their experience during teaching practice and their disposition of teaching profession after the teaching practice.

B. Objectives

- i) To establish the student teachers readiness for teaching practice and their experience during teaching practice.
- ii) To examine the student teachers disposition of teaching profession after teaching practice.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design which allows one to collect data about subject or events as they are found in a social setting or educational institution. It attempts to establish the range and distribution of some social characteristics, such as education or training and occupation and to discover how these characteristics may be related to certain behavior patterns or attitudes. Descriptive research design attempts to gather quantifiable information that can be used to statistically analyze a target audience or a particular subject thus it allows researcher to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena and to describe what exists with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Bernard, 2012). Hence the design was apt since the purpose of the study was to explore and create a detailed description of a phenomenon. The study focused on the university trainee teachers who attend teaching practice for one school term (13-15 weeks) in Kenya. The participants were fourth year bachelor of education students who were purposively selected because they had attended teaching practice. The actual sample size was 132 student teachers randomly selected for the study. A questionnaire was used to collect relevant information. The questionnaire had four sections; section A sought information on profile of the students, section B sought information about readiness for teaching practice, section C sought information about experience during teaching practice and section D sought information

about student teachers disposition of teaching profession after teaching practice. The questionnaire was administered to the fourth year Bachelor of Education students by the researcher assisted by research assistants. All information from the questionnaire was coded, summarized and analysed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented according to the themes derived from the research objectives of the study.

A. Profile of the Respondents

Data was gathered on gender of the respondents, their choice of courses after secondary education, selection of teaching subjects in teaching career and the information was presented.

Gender

The participants of the study were 55% male and 45% were female. This insinuates that there were more male teachers to enter in the teaching profession at secondary school level than female. The results are consistent with Fwu and Wang (2002) who found out that 58.1% secondary school teachers were male in Turkey. The findings differ with Mokoena (2012) who revealed that most men do not wish to enter the teaching profession. The results also contrast with Creed and Patton (2003) who showed that teaching is perceived as a feminized profession.

A.II. Bachelor of Education Course Choice

In Kenya, the students are supposed to make four choices of the course to pursue in the university depending on their level of preference in that the first is the most preferred. About the choice for Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) course, the results are indicated on Table 1.

Table i. Trainee teacher Choice of Bachelor of Education Course.

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
First	77	58
Second	34	26
Third	7	5
Fourth	5	4
KUCCPS placement	9	7

The information on Table i show that 58% of the fourth year students chose B.Ed. as their first choice, 26% of students chose B.Ed. as their second choice, 5% of students chose B.Ed. as their third choice, 4% of students chose B.Ed. as their fourth choice while 7% indicated that they were replaced by Kenya Universities and Colleges Placement Services (KUCCPS) into the teaching career. This implies that majority of student teachers (58%) chose B.Ed. as their first priority. The results concur with Archibong, Idaka and Edet (2009) on the study of university education students in Cross River State who found out that majority of respondents (66.1%) actually wanted to study education while minority (33.9%) indicated that education was not their first choice for course of study. The findings are not in line with Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) who on the research on experiences of student teachers in Vaal

University found out that majority of students in that class were doing the course by default. In addition the results also differ with Kagoda and Itaaga (2013) who on their study on teacher trainees expectations, experiences and assessment in Uganda found out that on student choice of education as their career, majority of the teacher trainees (43%) had education as their third or fourth choice; while only 4% of the respondents chose education as their first choice.

This study found out that around 13% of trainee teacher affirmed that they enrolled into teaching profession because there was no better alternative while 87% of student teacher pointed out that they enrolled into teaching profession willingly. The results are partially consistent with Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) who found out that students enrolled into B.Ed. course because they had no better alternative, they were not able to get jobs after their undergraduate qualification and because there was funding available for them. Klassen *et al.* (2011) affirmed that student teachers from Oman expressed greater endorsement of teaching as a 'fall-back' career and higher level of socio-cultural influence in their choice of teaching than Canadian participants. Also Su *et al.* (2001) revealed that most student teachers in the USA enter teaching of their own free will and choice while many Chinese student teachers enter teacher education programmes reluctantly.

The student teachers indicated various reasons for landing into teaching profession such as passion, marketability of the career, influence from friends and guardian, job security, flexibility in career and as stepping stone into other careers. Other trainee teachers revealed that they landed into teaching profession due to lack of guidance and low cluster points to join other careers. The findings are in line with other researchers who highlighted that student teachers have different motives for enrolling in teacher education (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012) and different motives for choosing teaching as a career (Pop & Turner, 2009) such as liking of teaching as an activity and the profession in general, seeing teaching as a socially worthwhile and important job, desire to help learners and a desire to contribute to society, level of salary and employment opportunities. Also Peter and Peter (2011) carried out a study in Malawi concerning the recruitment of secondary teachers and found out a range of perspectives for pursuing a teacher training course such as failure at joining a desired career, enrolling in teacher training programme as a springboard to other careers, or as a means of self-upgrading and teaching out of vocation. Additionally, Knobloch (2005) found out that students who are interested in teaching consider security of employment offered by teaching career and the attractive working hours and longer holidays.

A.III. Selection of Teaching Subjects

The trainee teachers are expected to pursue two teaching subjects and education to qualify to be trained teachers. The trainee teachers were asked about their choice of two teaching subjects. The results are illustrated on Figure 1.

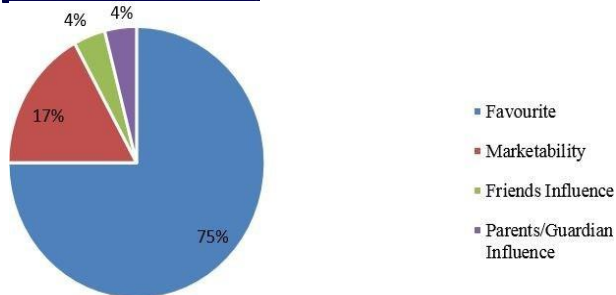


Fig.1. Student teacher Choice of Two Teaching Subjects.

The information on Figure 1 regarding the student teacher choice of two teaching subjects show that 75% of students pointed out that the two subjects were their favourite, 17% of students indicated that the two subjects were due to marketability of the subjects, 4% of students stated that the two subjects were due to friends influence while 4% confirmed that they chose the two subjects due to parents or guardian influence.

B. Readiness for Teaching Practice

This section gives student teachers views on the relevance of theory covered, teaching practice orientation and value of microteaching done before teaching practice exercise.

B.1 Relevance of the theory to Teaching Practice

Information was sought on what extent the theory covered in lectures prepared the student teachers for teaching practice. The results are indicated on Table ii.

Table ii. Students Responses on the Extent the theory Prepared them for Teaching Practice.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Great extent	126	95
Small extent	6	5
No extent	0	0

The information on Table ii shows that 95% of the student teachers affirmed that the theory covered prepared them to a great extent, 5% of student teachers confirmed the theory prepared them to a small extent while none of the student teachers stated that the theory covered prepared them to no extent. This implies that theory provided in teacher preparation program was significant and applicable in real classroom environment. The findings concur with Ranjan (2013) in the study of practice teaching programme who found out that B.Ed. course covered by student teachers indeed prepared them for the teaching practice. The results are not in line with Mannocho (2013) who concluded that there was insufficient preparation of student teachers especially in pedagogy aspect to develop them as quality professionals to teach Creative and Performing Arts in Botswana. The findings are dissimilar to Marais and Meir (2005) who established that respondents found a discrepancy between theory of education and reality of instruction, and where respondents indicated that they could not reconcile the teaching methods as explained during their lectures with those in schools. Kagoda and Itaaga (2013) found out that teacher trainees felt they are not adequately prepared to be teachers of secondary schools in Uganda due

to over packed program with many courses which are inadequately taught.

B.II. Teaching Practice Orientation

Regarding teaching practice orientation, 94% of the student teachers indicated that it was adequate while 6% of students stated it was not adequate because it did not address all the issues. This alludes that student teachers need to be guided on all the various areas that pertains school environment before starting teaching practice. The result resonates with Mannocho (2013) who recommended that student teachers should be given extensive orientation before teaching practice.

B.III. Microteaching

With reference to microteaching, 99% of student teachers confirmed they participated in microteaching exercise while 1% of the student teachers indicated that they did not participate in microteaching. Around 99% of student teachers revealed that microteaching prepared them well for teaching practice while 1% of student teachers pointed out otherwise. This shows that microteaching was a significant and effective technique for learning effective teaching since the skills acquired helped student teachers in teaching practice. The findings concur with Deniz (2010) who suggested that through micro-teaching applications, teachers can be adequately prepared for the teaching profession with regard to cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning. Koross (2016) on the study of Kenyan university student teachers experiences recommended that student teacher should participate at least once or twice in micro-teaching exercises as a way of exposing them to teaching practice. Wilkinson (1996) also found out through microteaching, student teachers were more equipped with the necessary skills prior to beginning their teaching.

C. Experiences during Teaching Practice

Around 96% of the student teachers revealed that teaching practice provided them an opportunity to discover their own strengths and weaknesses while 4% of the students disagreed.

Learning from other Teachers

About 86% of the trainee teachers indicated that they learnt new ideas from other teachers in school while 14% stated that they did not learn anything new from other teachers in the school. The student teachers pointed out valuable insights they got includes how to handle indiscipline cases among the students, teamwork and cooperation, time and class management, how to be responsible, being a role model and guidance and counseling techniques. The teacher trainee also indicated that they were enlightened on good student-teacher relationship, content delivery, carrying out routine activities in the school, commitment to work without close supervision and dedication to the teaching profession. This means that teaching practice is significant because it help student teachers to learn from the experienced teachers how to handle various issues that arise in the school and how to become better teachers from the real school situations.

C.II. Teaching Practice Experience

When students were asked how they can describe the teaching practice experience, 67% of student teachers responded positively such as exciting, encouraging,

friendly, enjoyable, inspiring and learning experience. Student teachers further noted that teaching practice was motivating and wonderful encounter. However 33% of student teachers observed that teaching practice was a demoralizing, discouraging, frightening and challenging experience.

C.III. Challenges during Teaching Practice

The student teachers reported that during teaching practice session, they faced a number of challenges that the source was either the school they attended the teaching practice, learners and staff, institutions they enrolled or personal. The challenges that were faced by trainee teachers included inadequate teaching and learning materials, cultural differences, language barrier, little support from the school administration and harsh environmental conditions. Related to the learners and staff, the challenges student teachers faced were student indiscipline, over enrolment of students, uncooperative and unfriendly students and staff, negative attitude of students towards the subject, poor performance, student absenteeism and conflict with other teachers. Regarding the individual student teacher, the challenges were financial constraints, inadequate mastery of content, fear to address the students, lack of enough time for preparation for non-academic activities, upkeep constraints and class management. In relation to the institution, the challenges that student teachers experienced were lack of close supervision from lecturers. The findings resonate with Ranjan (2013) who established that despite the thorough teacher preparation, student teachers found that it was not easy to teach because the learners were not cooperative, they did not do assignments, were noisy and were not actively involved in classroom activities. Moreover there was a language barrier. Mtika (2011) conducted a study on teaching practicum in Malawi and found out that some trainee teachers had greater workloads than anticipated, no support from cooperating teachers, class management issues due to large classes, lack of teaching and learning resources. Additionally, Msangya, Mkoma and Yihuan (2016) in their research on teaching practice experience for undergraduate teachers in Tanzania found out that students teachers revealed challenges they faced such as lack of financial and materials support, mismatch of teaching practice with the secondary schools calendar, negative attitude of fellow in-service teacher in the local schools and even secondary school students, inadequate supervision and insufficient time for teaching practice.

D. Student teachers Disposition after Teaching Practice

When students were asked about the duration of teaching practice, 64% of student teachers affirmed that the teaching practice session for one school term was enough while 36% of the student teachers were of opinion that the duration of teaching practice could be made longer like two school terms or even a whole year. The results are not consistent with Yan and He (2010) who posits that student teachers need more opportunities to undertake teaching practicum during several semesters throughout the four-year program, rather than only once in the final year of the program. Also Komba and Kira (2013) in a research in Tanzania provided

evidence that teaching practice duration was inadequate for student teachers to acquire the skills needed for effective teaching and recommended that duration for teaching practice should be increased. Additionally, Quick and Sieborger (2005) suggested that teaching practice period should be divided into at least two, possibly three, school experience sessions to induct student teachers more fully into the professional work of teachers.

The student teachers who suggested that teaching practice duration should be extended gave varied reasons such as more time to provide enough experience and perfect skills, have more time to interact with learners and school environment, enough time to familiarize with the activities and provide more time to adapt to the teaching profession. The student teachers also proposed they require more time to avoid undertaking the academic and non-academic activities hurriedly and under fear of failing the supervisor. The current research findings concur with Le (2004) who notes that student teachers need more time than they currently have to become professionally familiar with school environments and to practice their teaching skills.

Regarding the student teacher disposition to teaching profession after attending teaching practice, majority gave various positive responses such as; an encouraging profession, requires hard work and commitment, gave the feeling of a real teacher, enjoyable, good and noble profession. Other student teachers gave negative responses such as the profession is somehow stressing, not enjoyable, tiresome, has very many challenges and some revealed they hated teaching career. The findings concur with to Hacıomeroglu and Taskın (2010) who found that while some candidates choose the career as they think that the profession is respectable and they like teaching children, others think that the profession will make them happy.

When student teacher were asked whether they were intending to pursue teaching profession after completing B.Ed. course, 95% of the student teachers declared their intention to seek teaching job while 5% declined to join teaching profession. The student teachers who declined to take teaching as a career gave reasons such as slow payment and a lot of restrictions especially the dressing code.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on research findings, it could be concluded that majority of student teachers are being trained as teachers because teaching is their favourite career while others are being trained because they will get employment as teachers easily or did not have a better career choice. Majority of trainee teachers selected their teaching subjects that were their favourite although some selected subjects that they thought are in demand in secondary schools hence secure teaching jobs easily. The theory the student teachers covered in lectures was appropriate and prepared them properly for teaching career. The teaching practice orientation was apt and prepared the student teachers for school situation appropriately. Microteaching was found to have assisted in preparing students for teaching practice. Teaching practice allowed trainee teachers to discover their strengths and weaknesses and so it is an important activity in teacher

training. To majority of student teachers, teaching practice was exciting but had various challenges that need to be addressed to make teaching practice an educative and enjoyable session. Trainee teachers had positive attitude and declared they will remain in teaching profession.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, to make teaching practice useful and fulfilling, it could be recommended that preparation for student teacher for teaching practice by teacher educators need to be intensified by engaging them in microteaching activities for it improves the teaching skills. Also, student teachers require proper orientation that focuses on areas that pertains to the school matters to be able to work within a framework of legislation, statutory guidance and school policies. The training institutions need to increase the duration for teaching practice to provide enough time for student teachers to practice skills. The student teachers need to be supported financially by the government during teaching practice to minimize financial and material constraints.

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