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Exploring Intellectual Capital

Competencies acquired by Student Teachers during School Practice: A Case of Kibabii University

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ABSTRACT

School Practice (SP) is a major component of professional training of teachers undertaken by all students taking Education Courses at teacher training institutions in Kenya. SP is a practical evaluation of the competencies a student teacher is required to master before being declared a qualified teacher. However, many student teachers have displayed incompetence after such training sessions. This paper explores the competencies acquired by student teachers in Kakamega-Mumias Zone, Kenya during SP. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and observation guides. Findings from the study indicate that 85% of the student teachers emerge professionals while about 15% lack the necessary competencies of a trained teacher. Teacher training institutions offering this exercise should strive to ensure all student teachers acquire the expected competencies for effective curriculum implementation in schools.

Key words: School Practice, Competencies, Student-Teacher

INTRODUCTION

School Practice (SP) is the most important aspect of teacher education and is aimed at giving Student Teachers (STs) considerable exposure to practices of experienced teachers (Zeichner, 2006). SP therefore offers STs the opportunity to put into practice the theories learnt during course work.

 SP plays a role in education similar to internship or field attachment in other fields such as medicine, law and engineering by offering actual exposure to classroom experiences in the context of a real school environment. During this period, STs are expected to gain competencies of a professionally qualified teacher. According to Fakhra (2012), competencies can be operationally defined as knowledge and skills teachers require for effective and quality education and include subject matter knowledge and instructional acquaintance of skills to teach.

Mutsotso (2015) conceptualizes the school practice exercise in the following dimension. SP in teacher training institutions for secondary school teachers is usually one school term of 12-13 weeks. STs choose schools to go to within prescribed geographical zones, 3 months before start of the exercise – usually in January. Time to report coincides with opening of schools in Term 2 (May-August). STs report and are assigned classes to teach with lesson load ranging from 12-18 and other responsibilities. The ST is given 2 weeks within which to settle and prepare professional tools in readiness for assessment. This also gives them an opportunity to

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acclimatize with the classroom and school environment and procedures. Students are assessed a minimum of 4 times within specified intervals. At the end of the term, a confidential report is written by the school head teacher to the SP unit of the university detailing the STs performance of duties and overall professional potential. This is the practice adopted by the department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology at Kibabii University.

The competencies to be acquired by STs in this study are grouped into four areas: preparation of professional tools, content delivery, research activity and professional preparation. All the school practice activities are controlled and managed by a Zone Co-ordinator who resides in the zone in order to monitor students closely and advice where necessary accordingly.

METHODOLOGY

The area of study was Kakamega-Mumias Zone, Kenya. Descriptive survey design was adapted for the study. The study population consisted of all student teachers on school practice and head teachers of institutions hosting the student teachers.

Simple random sampling was used to select a representative sample of students on SP. Purposive sampling targeted students on SP from Kibabii University .This study used interview schedules, questionnaires and observation guides. STs were required to identify areas that were Very Easy (VE), Easy (E), Difficult (D) and Very Difficult (VD). Frequencies and percentages were obtained. Pearson correlation was done to establish significant aspects of teacher training that needed to be improved on.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
PREPARATION OF PROFESSIONAL TOOLS

This study sought to establish competencies acquired by student teachers with regards to preparation of professional tools. Specific areas investigated were preparing schemes of work, writing a detailed lesson plan, filling in a record of work covered, setting exam using a test specification table, preparing marking schemes, marking exams done and keeping student progress records. The frequencies obtained were: Preparation of schemes of work (VE-44%, E-56%), setting exams using a test specification table (VE-38%, E-37%, D-25%), preparing a detailed lesson plan (VE-51%, E-40%, D-9%), filling in a record of work covered (VE-72%, E-28%), preparing marking schemes (VE-60%, E-31%, D-9%), marking exams done by students (VE-54%, E-37%, D-9%) and keeping students progress record (VE-74%, E-26%).

These results show that some STs still experienced challenges in preparing a detailed lesson plan, setting exams using test specification table, preparing marking schemes and marking of exams done by students. Among the reasons given were that these items keep on varying and need a student to have extra input. No lesson plans were the same, a marking scheme had to be exhaustive and that not all students think the same way to give same answers to essay and comprehension questions. Further, Pearson correlation was done to establish significant relationships. The results are as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Pearson correlation among preparation of professional tools

Preparing schemes of work	Keeping record of work covered	Preparing detailed lesson plan	Setting exams	Preparing marking scheme	Marking exams done	Keeping student progress records
1	.316*	.436**	.292*	.180	.276*	.046
	.017	.001	.027	.180	.038	.731
.316*	1	-.075	.111	-.145	-.050	-.107
.017		.578	.411	.281	.714	.427
.436**	-.075	1	.522**	.855**	.768**	-.046
.001	.578		.000	.000	.000	.734
.292*	.111	.522**	1	.455**	.712**	-.259
.027	.411	.000		.000	.000	.052
.180	-.145	.855**	.455**	1	.830**	.014
.180	.281	.000	.000		.000	.916
.276*	-.050	.768**	.712**	.830**	1	.116
.038	.714	.000	.000	.000		.392
.046	-.107	-.046	-.259	.014	.116	1
.731	.427	.734	.052	.916	.392	

Significant relationships are established in preparing a detailed lesson plan (r= .436), setting exams (r=.522), preparing marking schemes(r=.855) and marking exams done (r=.830). This implies that teacher trainers have to expose STs to more practice of preparing a lesson plan and the area of exams and testing. Before STs proceed for SP exercise, they are required to have mastered the competencies in the lesson plan and setting and marking of exams.

CONTENT DELIVERY
Content delivery was observed under six areas and the frequencies obtained are: lesson introduction techniques(VE=61%, E=38%), mastery of content (VE=77%, E=22%), preparing learning resources (VE=49%, E=31%), developing a lesson in stages (VE=57, E=33%, D=8%), teacher learner interaction (VE=65%, E=35%) and lesson conclusion techniques (VE=57%, E=36%, D=5%). Further, Pearson correlation was done to establish significant relationships. The results are as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Pearson correlation among content delivery

Lesson introduction techniques	Mastery of content	Preparing learning resources	Developing a lesson in stages	Teacher-learner interaction	Lesson conclusion
1	.428**	.429**	.571**	.021	.308*
	.001	.001	.000	.876	.020
.428**	1	.014	.489**	.301*	.120
.001		.919	.000	.023	.374
.429**	.014	1	-.222	-.194	.191
.001	.919		.096	.149	.155
.571**	.489**	-.222	1	.255	.083
.000	.000	.096		.056	.541
.021	.301*	-.194	.255	1	-.075
.876	.023	.149	.056		.581
.308*	.120	.191	.083	-.075	1
.020	.374	.155	.541	.581	

Significant relationships are established in mastery of content (r=.428), preparing learning resources (r=.429), developing a lesson in stages (r=.571). The most significant aspect is developing a lesson in stages. Asked why this is so, the students pointed out lack of competency in distributing time to fit the content of the lesson. Though the actual writing of the lesson was easy, the actual delivery of the lesson always failed to fit within the time given, making it difficult for many lessons to be concluded appropriately. More concentration should be given on lesson presentation to make STs acquire the expected competencies in lesson delivery.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY
All STs from Kibabii University are expected to carry out a school or classroom based research and provide solutions to the identified problems. Results of STs competency on research activity had the following findings: study of the school environment (VE=35%, E=45%. D=19%), writing a proposal (VE= 19%, E=52%, D=22%, VD=5%), sampling procedures and techniques (VE=17%, E=57%, D=24%), preparing and administering research instruments (VE=31%, E=35%, D=30%, VD=4%), data analysis and writing a research report (VE=31%, E=54%, D=15%). Further, Pearson correlation was done to establish significant relationships. The results are as shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Pearson correlation among research activities

Study of school environment	Writing a proposal	Preparing and administering instruments	Sampling procedure and techniques	Data analysis and writing research report
1	.254	.528**	.296*	.302*
	.057	.000	.025	.022
.254	1	.466**	.625**	.536**
.057		.000	.000	.000
.528**	.466**	1	.528**	.402**
.000	.000		.000	.002
.296*	.625**	.528**	1	.084
.025	.000	.000		.533
.302*	.536**	.402**	.084	1
.022	.000	.002	.533	

Findings show that there were significant relationships in preparing and administering research instruments (r=.528), the process of sampling (r=.625) and data analysis (r=.536). Based on these findings, the topic of research seems to be the most challenging to STs. The reasons given for these are that the STs would prefer to concentrate on actual classroom teaching aspects than research which they may or may not engage in while teaching. The other reason is that there was inadequate preparation and practice of the content on research during course work.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Competencies in professional development of Student Teachers was based on five aspects whose percentage were as follows: writing a Curriculum Vitae (VE=58%, E=42%), writing a sample letter of application for a job (VE=68%, E=32%), keeping a personal diary (VE=84%, E=15%), development of confidence in class (VE=63%, E=33%, D=4%), and adapting the dress code of a teacher (VE=80%, E=14%, D=5%). This shows that some of the STs had challenges with gaining confidence in class and dressing to the expectation of a teacher. Pearson correlation revealed significant aspects as shown in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4: Pearson correlation among aspects of professional development

Writing a Curriculum Vitae	Writing sample letter of application for job	keeping a personal diary	Developed confidence in class	Adapted teacher dress code
1	.567**	.215	-.080	.090
	.000	.108	.553	.504
.567**	1	.327*	-.106	.189
.000		.013	.433	.159
.215	.327*	1	-.067	-.178
.108	.013		.618	.185
-.080	-.106	-.067	1	.485**
.553	.433	.618		.000
.090	.189	-.178	.485**	1
.504	.159	.185	.000	

Findings showed significant differences in writing a sample letter of application for a teaching job (r=.567). There was however a challenge for a few STs with regard to dress code and class confidence. Given that these were young teachers, they were bound to have problems with dressing as they would also want to fit in the current trend of dressing for the youth. Gaining confidence was more of a personality trait rather than training.

CONCLUSION

Four important areas of teacher competencies have been identified. The area that poses the greatest difficulty to STs is research activity specifically proposal writing (D=22%), sampling techniques (D=24%), preparation and distribution of data collection instruments (D=30%). Under preparation of professional tools, setting exams using a test specification table (D=25%) was the difficult aspect. Preparation and use of resources also was difficult (D=19%). For optimum realization of a competent teacher, there has to be more practice and exposure to the difficult areas. Since competencies can be developed through practice by the students, collaboration through a collaborating teacher or supervision by university supervisors, STs are called upon to work very closely with the schools and university supervisors in order to enable them acquire desirable competencies.

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