

# Post Graduate Female Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Teaching Practice: Enhancing Self-Efficacy and Teaching Performance

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## Abstract

Pre-service teachers are student teachers engaged in a teacher education programme and pursuing teacher certification. They participate in supervised field-based teaching experiences while being monitored and guided by university lecturers and mentor teachers. These are students that have acquired professional teacher training from higher education institutions but have little to no classroom experience. Critically, female pre-service teachers to enhance their self-efficacy and teaching performance during their teaching practice they need to be mentored and supported. In the context of this paper, self-efficacy refers to a student teacher's belief in his or her own skills to do a required behaviour to accomplish the desired outcome in the art of teaching. This study aims to investigate female pre-service teachers' perspectives of teaching practice. A convenient sample of fifty postgraduate female pre-service teachers registered at Central University of Technology was employed. The information was gathered in a qualitative method. A thematic data analysis was used. The data was collected using a group interview questions, thematic analysis was used for data analysis. Findings indicate that teaching practice is an excellent strategy for improving professional growth, teaching performance, and self-efficacy. However, the findings reveal that several difficulties, such as the length of the teaching practice, the lack of mentorship support, organizational problems, and the limited freedom allowed during teaching practice. Finally, the study recommends ways of how to improve the quality of teaching practice for female pre-service teachers.

**Keywords:** Female Pre-Service Teachers, Self-Efficacy, Teaching Performance

## Introduction

Learning to teach is a developmental process that student teachers must go through before entering the teaching profession (Okeke, van Wyk, Adu, & Wolhuter, 2016). According to Kolb (2014), 'teaching practice' encompasses teaching skills, student teachers' experience, and practical parts of a course, in addition to academic study. Teaching practice is an essential part

of teacher preparation (Marais and Meier 2004; Maphosa, Shumba and Shumba 2007) and varies by institution (Perry 2004). Whatever form it takes, it exposes teacher trainees or student teachers to the realities of the teaching profession. The teaching practice experience aims to help student teachers integrate theory and practice, collaborate and learn from teachers, prepare competent and effective teachers, and promote ongoing professional development and induction into the teaching profession (Mtika 2008). Practice-teaching performance can predict teacher success in the long run. Working with learners in schools during practice-teaching results in a high level of positive emotional involvement. Additionally, practice-teaching it assist the female pre-service teachers engage with a teaching culture. According to Akbar (2001), the goal of teaching practice is for student teachers to build a professional relationship with the school's teachers and establish proper teacher-pupil relationships.

Teaching practice refers to preparing student-teachers for teaching through practical training. In addition, teaching practice is an essential part of teacher education. Furthermore, it provides student-teachers with real-world teaching and learning experiences. Teaching Practice (TP) is a supervised and examined educational program that permits student-teachers to apply theoretical knowledge to practical teaching, according to Wieman (2022). Bhebhe and Tshuma (2016) define School-Based Work Integrated Learning (SBWIL) as a curriculum that combines academic learning with practical application in the workplace, which is commonly referred to as TP. According to Bhebhe and Tshuma (2016), TP is a preparation approach utilized by Teacher Training Institutions (TTI) to improve the proficiency of student-teachers while they learn to be teachers. During TP, female pre-service teachers observe the skills, information, and practices required for the teaching profession and apply what they have learned.

Although TP's properly organized program, student teachers face challenges during their school experience. Research indicates that student teacher they encounter challenges to apply their theoretical knowledge in a school setting, resulting in a gap between theory and practice in teaching. Despite preparation classes, student teachers struggle to apply theoretical knowledge during teaching practice (Rembe, Mavuso, & Shumba, 2017).

#### *Aim of the study*

The aim of the study was to investigate the female pre-service teachers perception regarding teaching practice.

#### *Objectives of the study*

To establish the female pre-service teachers perception regarding teaching practice.

To establish the challenges faced by female pre-service teachers during teaching practice.

#### *Research questions*

What are the perceptions of female pre-service teachers during their teaching practice?

What are the challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice ?

**Purpose of the Study**

Each year, the pre-service teachers attend TP to enhance their pedagogical skills, and they meet with different dynamics and challenges in their classrooms. At times they are not supported in their classrooms, so that they can familiarize themselves with these challenges. Mosas (2019) suggests that throughout the TP period, pre-service teachers should use their theoretical knowledge and skills in practice. To ensure effective integration into the education system, pre-service teachers should prioritize their school-based experience and Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) should provide enough preparation. This study aimed to investigate the female pre-service teachers regarding teaching practice.

The self-efficacy of pre-service teachers is a critical factor of their goals and behavior. These people enter the academic field with passion and enthusiasm, hoping to generate high-quality teaching and learning, but without adequate support and guidance, they develop poor self-esteem. Classes face multilingual learners; teachers must be confident in meeting the different needs of their learners. Bellibas and Gumus (2019) noted that if institutions wish to fulfill the goals they set for themselves, leadership is a necessary factor. According to Cruickshank (2017), leaders can promote the growth and development of educational institutions as well as student achievement through their various roles. Makura and Zireva (2013) emphasize the challenging relationships between school leaders and mentors during teaching practice in Zimbabwe. Their results indicate that collusion and bias in evaluation processes weaken the trustworthiness of practicum experiences. New educators often enter classrooms lacking genuine feedback, making them unprepared for real-world challenges. Makura's research on women in leadership (2012) highlights the influence of gender norms on classroom interactions. Women educators might encounter heightened scrutiny or diminished power, particularly in male-dominated school settings. Effective classroom management stands out as a significant challenge. New educators find it challenging to assert their authority, address the varied needs of their students, and uphold discipline. Makura's extensive research indicates that insufficient readiness for behavioral dynamics leads to stressors in the early stages of one's career

**Theoretical Framework**

This is an investigative case study. This research was based on Social Cognitive Theory. According to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), behavior is influenced by both the environment and individuals, with the environment serving as a model. Bandura (1997) advanced social cognitive theory by recognizing the significance of self-efficacy. The study concluded that those with self-efficacy believed they could achieve their goals. Bandura (1997) describes learning as a social process that involves reciprocal interaction between individuals, their environment, and behavior. SCT, which is commonly utilized in education, communication, and psychology, comprises seeing others' social interactions and experiences without the aid of media.

**Methodology**

A convenient sample of fifty postgraduate female pre-service teachers registered at Central University of Technology was employed. The information was gathered in a qualitative method. A thematic data analysis was used. The data was collected using a group interview questions, thematic analysis was used for data analysis.

### **The Review of Related Literature**

Taole (2020) defines TP (Teaching Practice) as a teacher training approach based on the micro-teaching principles. TP minimizes the difficulties of teaching by dividing it down into basic components that teachers can practice individually. In a comparable manner Reddy (2019) notes that micro-teaching creates a scaled-down, realistic classroom environment in which teachers can enhance their teaching skills and experiment with new tactics. In this constrained atmosphere, student-teachers have to engage themselves in the school culture and acquire their perspective. Student teachers gain knowledge by teaching in schools under supervision and assessment (Maphosa & Ndamba, 2011). During the TPs, student teachers are allocated to schools where they teach and participate in other educational activities, they are allocated some mentor teachers to supervise them. Mokone and Setlalto's (2023) research found that mentor teacher play an important role in increasing others' skills and talents by engaging in an effective and good connection. According to Mathipa and Matlabe (2016), motivation is "key to the mentoring process". Mentor teachers are extremely important in any school because their purpose is to assist student teachers develop their self-efficacy.

#### *Teaching Practice*

Teaching Practice provides a chance for student teachers to learn about the role and operation of the education system. According to Marais and Meier (2004), teaching practice refers to the diverse experiences that student teachers gain while working in classrooms and schools. This field experience offers a hard yet gratifying opportunity to work with students in classrooms and gain professional skills. These experiences may strengthen teachers' professional competency. Many scholars have described teaching practice from various perspectives. According to Davison (2010), teaching practice is the systematic exposure of trainee teachers to real-world classroom scenarios. Similarly, Haines (2015) defined teaching practice as the time spent by a preservice teacher as part of his undergraduate degree gaining supervised teaching experience. Teaching practice challenges students to leave their comfort zone as students on campus and face the reality of teaching as a second teacher in the classroom. Teacher education is one of the most crucial parts of every country's educational system. Teacher education is the foundation for providing quality education because no educational system can rise beyond the quality of its instructors (Banja and Mulenga 2019, MoE, 1996, and Bishop, 1985). According to Caires, Almeida, & Vieira (2012), teaching practice in teacher education involves extensive study of oneself, others, and novel settings. Teaching practice helps student teachers gain self-awareness, practice classroom management skills, and connect theory to practice (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015). Analysing teacher education objectives reveals that teaching practice is well-supported by evidence. Teacher education is to provide teachers with professional knowledge and abilities, as well as develop their identity (Kostiainen, Ukskoski, Ruohotie-Lyhty, Kauppinen, Kainulainen, & Makinen 2018). School experience, often known as teaching practice, is a critical component of any teacher preparation curriculum.

Teacher training programs provide student teachers with opportunities to build necessary skills, attitudes, and abilities through teaching practice. These teachers they practice core classroom practice such as lesson plan, delivery of subject content in a diverse classroom, and evaluation, including reflection. The duration of this practice vary amongst HEIs. According to Koko (2002), most educational institutions expect student teachers to engage in teaching

practice as part of their professional training. However, it provides pre-service teachers with an understanding of teacher responsibilities and functions. Practice teaching is an important part of becoming a teacher. It enables student teacher to gain real-world teaching and learning experience. During teaching practice, a student-teacher is given the opportunity to practice teaching before entering the real world of teaching. According to Rakesh Ranjan (2013), student-teachers view teaching practice as a crucial part of their preparation for the profession, as it bridges the gap between their student-hood and professional membership. There is also a need to develop strategies to help student teachers shift from the position of student to that of beginning teacher. The use of field experience varies according on the level of support provided to student teachers.

#### *Self-Efficacy and Pre-Service Teachers*

Bandura (1977) introduced the concept of self-efficacy, which he defined as an assessment of one's ability to execute a desired degree of performance to reach an ideal outcome (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy impacts a person's ability to govern their actions, motivation, thinking processes, affective and physiological states. Pre-service teachers must develop teaching, classroom-related, communication, collaborative learning, and classroom management skills (Slater & Main, 2020; Pfitzner-Eden, 2016), as well as cognitive, task management, and solution-seeking abilities (Bandura, 1997).

Pre-service teachers do not learn about "self-efficacy" through collaboration with cooperating teachers or university supervisors (Borko & Mayfield, 1995), nor through internship-related conferences. Teacher education programs provide undergraduate students with pedagogical and material knowledge, while also addressing their academic demands (Chan, Maneewan, & Koul, 2021). Kukari (2010) found that pre-service teachers viewed teaching as knowledge transmission from the teacher to learners. Pre-service teachers are prepared through teacher education programs that cover classroom management (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Postholm, 2013) and perceived self-efficacy (Slater & Main, 2020; Helfrich & Clark, 2016). Few studies have examined affinities, perceptions (Yuan, 2017), gender differences that influence the desire to become a teacher, and the teacher development process, particularly in Thailand's teacher development program.

Preparing pre-service teachers requires developing teaching, classroom, communication, collaborative learning, cognition, task management, and problem-solving abilities (Manowaluilou & Reeve, 2022). According to Clark and Newberry (2019), student teachers have extensive understanding of classrooms, schools, and instructional approaches before enrolling in teacher education programs. Manowaluilou and Reeve (2022) state that the teacher education program strives to educate undergraduate students by using pedagogical knowledge and content while also meeting their academic demands. To prepare pre-service teachers for teaching practice, it's important to enhance their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a significant factor for pre-service teachers. Several research have focused on enhancing self-efficacy in pre-service teachers (Clark & Newberry, 2019).

Pre-service teachers' professional competence and self-efficacy are crucial for effective learning. Research indicates that teacher self-efficacy directly correlates with effective teaching performance (Durak, 2021). Pre-service teachers should have confidence in their capacity to create distraction-free classroom environments that support student learning. El-

Abd and Chaaban (2021) suggest that self-confidence helps improve classroom management. Dos Santos (2020) emphasizes the need of providing a favorable learning environment for teacher candidates in order to foster a positive teaching environment. Teacher education institutions assist student teachers in developing and maintaining self-efficacy (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019).

#### *Enhancing Pre -Service Teachers Teaching Performance*

Professional development will assist the pre-service teachers improve their well-being, knowledge, abilities, and instructional practices. Dehghan (2020) stated that professional development may include a number of activities that contribute to teacher empowerment, however Sachs (2016) suggested that professional development is required for both personal and social reform and progress. A study on the self-efficacy and professional engagement of new teachers in a teacher development program (TDP) in the context of vocational education in China discovered that these teachers frequently lack a strong professional identity and a low level of professional commitment due to a poor social reputation, a heavy workload, low pay, and a lack of promotion opportunities in schools (Hu and Hao 2014; Hu and Zhou 2021; Li 2017).

In light of this, Gurevich, Stein, and Gorev (2017) argue that effective professional development is critical to improving novice teachers' classroom management skills, whereas Naidoo and Naidoo (2018) argue that a teacher's professionalism can be defined as their ability to connect with students in a meaningful way, devise creative ways to teach required material, and inspire, engage, and motivate young adults to prepare for ever-changing

#### **Findings**

The findings of the study reveal several key themes related to the perceptions of the female pre-service teachers regarding teaching practice. This paper was guided by two research questions, and the data analysis revealed themes.

#### *Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of female pre-service teachers during their teaching practice?*

Successful and productive teaching practice may be connected to the role of pre-service teacher mentors. The data revealed that some of the pre-service teachers were able to successfully carry out the teaching practice due to the assistance offered by their mentor. A mentor is a competent and knowledgeable teacher who leads a pre-service teacher through the process of entering a specific profession. The most crucial duty of a mentor is to establish a professional relationship that supports ongoing support for their mentees' professional identities.

The research topic was solved by analyzing qualitative data acquired through focus group interviews with PGCE pre-service teachers. Themes that came from this research question included lack of mentor support and teaching skills.

#### *Lack of Support from the Mentor Teachers*

Most PGCE pre-service students stated that they were not mentored during their teaching practice; they claim that they were not given the resources that they will have to use in their classroom, and no one showed them how to navigate the classroom. The participants stated

that they do not feel like they are growing in their institutions since there is no assistance or guidance from their superiors. They perceive a lack of support from their mentors.

*(ST 1) shared that mentoring is crucial for pre-service teachers, to build confidence and self-assurance, without mentoring, as a first time student who need to deliver a subject content to the learners, I might struggle to adapt to the school culture.*

*Some were very vocal about the issue of a lack of mentorship, saying, "as student teachers, we lack mentorship a lot, and it is so frustrating to arrive at a place and be on your own. We are unable to cope since it is our first time in a classroom, so, it's a lot; we need mentors not just during teaching practice." (ST 2 and 4)*

*(ST 5) indicated that, "as pre-service teachers, we need someone with more experience, a mentor teacher, to guide us, we encounter many challenges in our teaching, but without such person and their assistance, at times we feel as if we are in the wrong space, mentoring is very important.*

It is clear that PGCE pre-service teachers require mentor teachers, who will support them in their classrooms in preparing lesson plans and delivering topic matter in a varied classroom setting. Mathipa and Matlabe (2016) believe that motivation is necessary for successful mentoring partnerships.

*What are the challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice ?*

Pre-service teachers see classroom management as a challenge in their first year of teaching. Classroom management contains components of classroom discipline, but it focuses on providing a learning environment that is organized, engaged, and courteous for both teachers and learners (Hanane, 2016). The following sub-themes emerged:

#### *Learner Discipline and Classroom Management*

Learners discipline and classroom management were seen as one of the issues the pre-service teachers encounter during their TP. Sabaduquia and Bulat-ag (2017) found that classroom disciplinary management abilities are among the most challenging obstacles, particularly for new teachers. This is because new teachers lack both teaching and management expertise, and today's classrooms are filled with learners with a wide range of behaviours, making it difficult for them to deal with when these classroom issues surface during lesson delivery.

*Some participants indicated that, the biggest challenge that the pre-service teachers encounter is disciplining their learners, and we fear to reprimand the learners in an overcrowded classroom, some might retaliate. (ST 1 and 2)*

*This was supported by (ST 3) by stating that verbatim " I had a challenge disciplining my classroom and I was alone that day, the mentor left me with them, I tried and they did not listen , I was worried what would the principal say to me"*

While on the other hand other some pre-service teachers shared the same sentiments with their peers by emphasising the issue of disciplining an overcrowded classroom. *the participants shared that (ST 4, 5 and 6), it is a challenge for us to discipline an overcrowded classroom , because the learners end up playing with you and laughing at you as if you don't*

*know what you are doing in class, it is a serious issue because we can't attend each learner in a manner that will satisfy you, and they are too many we end up being frustrated in terms of disciplining them.*

*One of the participant shared that "Mme, in these classrooms we have ill-disciplined learners, and it is a challenge toward us students who are new in teaching profession, it is difficult for me to handle a large classroom because i would find myself spending half of my period reprimanding the learners and not teaching, so (yaahhh) that was my challenge when i started doing my TP there and it was a high school, even without being assisted.*

It is clear that participants are afraid of disciplining their students in the classroom for fear that they may retaliate. Fear of dealing with disruptive behavior is a major reason for rookie teachers to avoid entering the profession after graduation (Sullivan, Johnson, Owen, & Conway, 2014).As a result, according to the statement, the researcher could propose that pre-service teachers should be mentored and supported during their first year of teaching so that they can develop techniques to deal with issues that may emerge in their classrooms.

### **Discussion**

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of the PGCE pre-service teachers regarding teaching practice. The focus was to identify on how to enhance the self-efficacy and teaching performance of the pre-service teachers. The results of this study revealed that the they lack support from their mentor teachers and they have a challenge on disciplining the learners and managing their classrooms.The participants indicated that with the support of the mentor teachers they might be able to acquire some skills they might use in their classrooms.Learner discipline should aim to foster self-discipline, accountability, compliance, collaboration, support, and safety. Discipline is also a systematic way of educating and nurturing children in order to develop competence, self-control, self-direction, the reinforcement of desired behaviors, and a plan for eradicating undesirable behaviors. Due to classroom management issues, it has been found that the number of novice teachers departing the teaching profession during the first three years is high across the board (Clark, 2012; Redding, 2018). Participants reported feeling not supported, motivated, and encouraged by their mentor teachers during teaching practice. The mentor teacher's role is to support the development of a pre-service teacher and promote learning in the classroom. According to Radford (2017), a mentor should support learning, reflect, watch, and provide feedback.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that pre-service teachers require mentoring to improve their self-efficacy and teaching performance during their teaching practice. With the help and supervision of their mentor teachers, pre-service teachers may increase their self-efficacy and be able to manage their classrooms effectively. HEIs and teacher education colleges should incorporate curricula that highlight pre-service teachers' ability to discipline and manage their classes. Micro-lessons should be emphasized in teacher education to help pre-service instructors with classroom management and learner discipline.

## Recommendations

The mentor teacher should be assigned some pre-service teacher for two years to guide and evaluate their growth. Mentors play a crucial role in developing strong bonds with their mentees, allowing them to advance in the teaching profession.

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