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Abstract

Purpose: The study was carried out to explore the student teachers' perceptions and experiences on school practice in terms of competence development.

Methodology: Phenomenology as a design was adopted using unstructured interviews and documents review to collect data from twelve purposively selected third year student teachers as participants. Data was analyzed using the framework analysis.

Findings: School practice was clearly understood by participants as a learning experience that involves putting theory into practice with the help from supervisors and senior teachers. However, it was conducted along the curriculum requirements as an assessment/examination by the university supervisors. Consequently, some challenges were faced. These included, difficulties in applying all the various methods taught by different lecturers, lack of professionalism, little feedback/conferencing with supervisors, hurried reports, limited mentorship and supervisory aspects in school practice host schools and limited materials to use among others.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The teacher preparation institutions in Uganda Makerere inclusive need to improve the general methods course to all students to cater for issues in lesson preparation, presentation, classroom management, assessment and evaluation. An interdependent relationship between the University and the SP host schools is required to promote a working relationship between the supervisors and host teachers for mentoring and supervisory aspects to student teachers. Makerere University and other teacher preparation institutions need constant professional development courses to promote professionalism among supervisors to address issues like lack of feedback/conferencing and poor supervisor-student relationships among others.

Keywords: *School practice, student teachers 'perceptions, pedagogical practices, competence development.*

Introduction

School practice is significance to student teachers and their future profession because it translates the classroom theory to practice. This paper explored student teachers' perceptions and experiences on school practice (SP) as a pedagogical practice and competence development at Makerere University in Uganda. It explains the meaning of school practice, student teachers' perceptions and experiences on its purpose and various roles. The paper explored both positive/attributes and negative/challenges of student teachers regarding school practice. The paper also explored the views of student teachers on how the exercise can be made fruitful and proposes some recommendations not only to benefit Makerere but also other teacher education institutions elsewhere in the country and the globe.

Background to the study

Makerere University and Teacher Education

Makerere University is the oldest higher education institution in Uganda established in 1922. It served as the only university in the country from 1970 up to 1988. Makerere School of Education started as a teacher preparation institute and has undergone through various stages to develop to its apparent status. It is still growing but apparently, the School of Education enlarged to become the College of Education and External Studies offering both undergraduate and postgraduate education related degree programmes. The College mission is "To excel in the preparation of teachers, other education practitioners, adult education providers, community workers and providers of open, distance and e-learning; to excel in the provision of quality Open distance and e-Learning (ODeL) programmes; research and in knowledge transfer and partnership relevant to CEES and responsive to national and global needs (Makerere University, 2020).The CEES gives high priority to school practice as an integral part to teacher education. Through school practice, students gain confidence as young teachers in the profession. When a student teacher gets negative and unfortunate school practice experiences, the real impression on the whole teaching profession and learning exercise can be put to jeopardy. Most importantly, those in the training of teachers find it an opportunity to evaluate themselves, whether what was theoretically taught has been practically grasped by student teachers.

However, in the past two decades (from 1988), as a result of massification of university education to increase accessibility to all in Uganda, enrollment of undergraduate student teachers increased (Matovu, 2018). This resulted into many institutional challenges for instance governance, leadership and management, quality and relevance of programmes, staffing, unattractive institutional environment, and poor research innovation capacity among others (Mamdani, 2007; Baryamureeba, 2013; Kasozi, 2015). These are all

reflected in the quality of teaching and learning of the learners and socio-economic development (NCHE, 2014). Many Universities Makerere inclusive are facing the challenge of declined quality in teaching and obsolete curricula that lacks emphasis on skills and lack of no well facilitated national and institutional quality assurance and enhancement systems (Roberts & Ajai-Ajagbe, 2013; NCHE, 2014).There is lack of adequate teaching resources, poor teaching facilities, lack of equipped library and access to global knowledge (NCHE, 2014). Due to soaring numbers, pedagogical practices have inadvertently remained in the traditional authoritative paradigm and participative teaching and learning has been ignored contrary to the advocates by contemporary philosophers (Freire, 2000; Illich, 1971; Ratna and Tron, 2015, Cook-Sather, 2011; UNESCO, 2015).

There is a great concern that fresh graduates do not develop the core or specialized competencies to succeed in school, work and life. Some complaints from employers about the poor quality of skills produced by universities have been raised (World Economic Forum, 2014). Baryamureeba (2013); Akankwasa (2002) assert that due to diversification of higher education system in the country, Makerere University enrollment increased beyond its capacity leading to decline in the quality of its output. Mamdani (2007) carried out a study at Makerere University and illustrated the negative effects of marketisation of university programs and their detriment to the quality of education. This was seen as affecting the quality of pedagogical practices to which school practice is one vital practical pedagogical practice in teacher preparation.

There is need for Makerere university to transform and be more innovative in the development of the 21st century required pragmatic orientations (Kasule et al., 2014). In Philosophy of Education, listening to students increases knowledge to competently understand explicit and all underlying issues in education for meaningful educational innovations and improvements. Listening to the student teachers' perspectives and experiences on school practice could become a cornerstone and innovation to exploring the kind of school practice that can harness their potentials in developing competent teachers ready to compete favourably with the demands of the 21st Century work force and hustle with the current teaching work-related challenges.

This study therefore enabled the student teachers to participate in the learning process and reflect on their own experiences in modifying school practice. The participants were able to reflect on their experiences, construct their own understanding of the school practice pedagogical practices and contribute to the world of teaching through their thoughts, emotions and behavioral actions and in turn could transform into knowledge and skills/competence development. (Akinsanmi, 2008).

At Makerere university, school practice (SP) is a practical teaching activity when students are given an opportunity to illustrate the acquired pedagogical skills so that they are

helped or trained more by professional teachers through supervision of the lessons taught over a period of time (Onen, *et al.*, 2016). The school practice exercise is done by second and third years at the end of the second semester normally from June to July of every year. Through SP; students gain confidence and impression on the whole teaching and learning exercise as young teachers in the profession. Any negative and unbecoming impression in the exercise could affect the significance of the whole process of teacher preparation (Rugyendo, 2011). On the other hand, lecturers find an opportunity to evaluate their teaching both theoretically and practically during school practice. They are able to predict the quality and competence of the forth coming teachers as well as perfect their skills.

School practice is thus an integral pedagogical practice that deals with the practical part of teacher education (Smith & Lev-Avir, 2005). Pedagogical practices refer to the educational actions and decisions on approaches, methods and strategies that are used to support teaching and learning. Student teachers' perceptions on school practice supervision are their lived experiences, satisfactions and dissatisfactions they hold in conducting the school practice exercise. The student teachers' perceptions and experiences became a cornerstone in exploring whether school practice supervision is given the significance and place it holds in a student teachers' life in as far as competence development is concerned.

Competence developments can be defined as a process of acquiring the desired educational outcomes. These normally include cognitive, functional, ethical, and personal dimensions that link complex knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Nyambura, *et al.*,2011). When a student demonstrates their ability to do something and show the outcome of the learning process, the competence statement is written in a 'can…statement…', making it easier for the student teachers to demonstrate and recognize individual qualities, attitudes, skills and knowledge that arise as the result of their work performance (Liakopoulou, 2011). Competences are distinguished between generic or core and specific domain competencies for a given course of study (Kallioinen, 2010). The generic competencies are the skills/ knowledge needed in all content domains and can be utilized in new professional situations such as, ICT skills, Numeracy skills, Communication skills among others. The domain specific competencies are based on the clusters of knowledge, skills, attitudes within a particular specific content domain related to the professional (Nyambura, et al., 2011; Kallioinen, 2010). In teaching and learning therefore, a variety of competencies must be identified.

Student teachers need to be taught, mentored and supervised well during preparation to develop in them a variety of competences that suit both generic and specific domain competencies. This could holistically equip them with all skills and knowledge critical for a competent professional (Nyambura, *et al.*, 2011; Majoni & Nyaruwata, 2015).

Student teachers should have the ability to develop important knowledge, values, aptitudes, and attitudes necessary to address complex issues they will encounter in their future personal lives and professional career. This was harnessed through their perceptions and experiences, attributions and dissatisfactions regarding school practice supervision as a pedagogical practice.

Theoretical perspective

The theoretical framework focused on student teachers' attributions to their competence development in teaching and learning. Attributions are based on satisfactions or dissatisfaction in regard to pedagogical practices at the university. Both the attribution theory propelled by Weiner (2010) together with the Bern's Perception theory guided this study to express that people are always searching for reasons to explain why an event turned out the way it did (Weiner, 1986).

There are basically three areas of study in the Attribution theory namely person's perception, self-perception and event/object perception (Gendolla & Koller, 2001). The theory is called an interpersonal theory of motivation, and focuses on the reactions that individuals such as peers, advisors, professors, and parents express toward self-performance and that of others in a social context. Weiner (2000) later developed an interrelated theory called the intrapersonal theory of motivation which focuses on individual expressions and also applies to many social contexts. This theory assumes that individuals "are scientists, trying to understand themselves and their environment and then acting on the basis of this knowledge" (Weiner, 2000, p. 2) Bern's Self-Perception Theory is also related to the attribution theory and explains that people attempt to understand and attribute causes of their own actions and perceptions of others (Wilson & Linville, 1982). The theory perceives success as one's own ability/effort but attributes failure to external forces/factors (Weiner, 2010). Student teachers' perceptions and experiences with pedagogical practices in regard to school practice expressing their satisfaction and dissatisfaction in competence development offered reasons and judgement on what informed their competence, what worked and what did not work. This made their attributions to competence development explicit.

Methodology

The study was purely qualitative and adopted the phenomenological research design in order to explain the reality on the ground through individual student teachers' perceptions and lived experiences on school practice and competence development at Makerere University. Phenomenology became the particular genre of inquiry to crystalize their expressions. The phenomenological genre is rooted in the philosophical views of a German Mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) (Creswell, 2007; Lindelof & Taylor, 2002). According to Lindelof and Taylor (2002), "Husserl's philosophy of

phenomenology sought to define the 'essence' of the objects of our perceptions and that human consciousness orders the ways that we understand the physical nature of the world" (p. 33). It is related to the constructivist postmodern view that believes that knowledge is constructed not socially inflicted.

Participants

The target population consisted of undergraduate students in third year pursuing Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science with Education degrees from the College of Education and External studies in Makerere University. This is due to the fact that, to assess the quality of any education system, students as potential educators, administrators and stake holders should be contacted. The third-year undergraduate students were selected not only because they had done the first school practice but also because they had relatively more exposure as finalists. They were assumed to have acquired some competences during their second year SP and getting ready for the world of work. Indeed, they were able to reflect on what worked and did not work for them in school practice and had a lot to share.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

Unstructured interviews and document review were used to collect data for the study. The study used face-to-face unstructured interview in order to encourage clarity, flexibility and probing. An interview guide containing the objective/themes of the study and questions was prepared. The research questions and the interview guide were used to logically guide the data analysis in order to systematically present the findings and discussion.

Appropriate ethical principles and guidelines were followed to protect the rights of the participants during the research process in line with principles of conducting research among humans in Uganda (UNCST, 2014 p.2). Participation was voluntary ascertained by signing the consent form and commitment to confidentiality. Pseudonyms were also used to protect the identity of the participants, and the interview was audio recorded with the voice recorder to allow replay for in-depth transcription and understanding.

The study also reviewed documents and literature concerning school practice and competence development and these included Makerere University School practice guidelines and handbooks, assessment forms, Makerere University planning and Report documents, Journal articles and some textbooks on school practice. Finally, a transparent relationship between the participants and the researcher was maintained to continuously add on and review information to enrich the findings.

Thematic framework analysis was used to analyze the data collected because framework provides a structure into which data can be systematically reduced to enable analysis of the

data by case and by code. This allowed for comparing and contrasting data with ease across individual cases. Content analysis was used to analyze documents data (Creswell, 2007).

Findings and Discussion

The findings are categorized into four themes. The first theme explains the purpose /role of school practice, in the second theme, the negative/ challenges encountered by student teachers during supervision are discussed, the third part constitutes of student teachers' views/ recommendations to improve the exercise and the final part presents conclusions and recommendations.

The Role of School Practice

Students who pursue the course of teacher education require teaching practice to evaluate their teaching skills and perfection in delivery of their content (Makerere University, 2018). The concept of school practice is deeply rooted in the drive towards the education and training of competent and professional teachers (Rugyendo, 2011). Majority of participants in this study understood school practice as an exercise that involves putting theory into practice with the help/ moderation by a supervisor. R3 expressed that,

> *School practice is when the student teachers put into practice what they have learnt overtime through activities in and around the school under the supervision of University lecturers to perfect in their teaching and later on in their profession.*

This was reinforced by R2 who said that, it is the period of time when student teachers are sent out from the University to schools to gain practical teaching skills and experience towards professional work. This she explained that,

> *School practice supervision is a teaching activity that gives chance or an opportunity to student teachers to demonstrate their teaching skills acquired over time in the learning activities with the help of a supervisors.*

Some of the participants understood school practice as a learning experience where students learn to teach what they were also taught by the supervisors and cooperating school senior teachers. Some student teachers did know how teaching was in terms of the actual teaching situation until they took part in school practice exercise. It is the real sense; they could not figure out the teaching experience; what teaching is and what effort should be put in. This was brought out by R12 that,

> *I came to understand school practice as involving learning how to teach well more especially teaching as to how we are taught by our lecturers. One cannot teach well at the beginning of school practice but eventually you learn and become perfect.*

However, some participants understood school practice as part of an assessment/examinations that evaluates student teachers' teaching abilities as it is always awarded marks and failure to meet its requirements, one cannot graduate as a teacher at the University. According to the teacher education curriculum in Uganda, school practice is a practical teaching assessment where student teachers should demonstrate their teaching abilities. There is no teacher education that can be said to be complete without an effective student teachers' teaching practice program5. Like students who study medicine cannot graduate without an effective internship. Likewise, those who pursue education have to do school practice in order to become qualified teachers. The concept of school practice is deeply rooted in the drive towards the education and training of competent and professional teachers. The school practice assessment form (2018-2019) entailed marks that should be allocated to each item/stage of lesson development. Thus, some student teachers are right to understand it as part of examinations to be passed. Besides, it is graded in terms of marks/ scores obtained. R11 said that,

> *It is part of university examinations where one has to demonstrate abilities to teach well and obtain good marks/grades to be able to graduate….. In case you fail school practice or if the marks get lost you can't appear on the graduation list.*

In this respect participants had a broader view of the scope of school practice as deeply rooted into three aspects; transition from theory to practice, as a learning experience on how to impart knowledge and as part of examinations to be passed in order to graduate as a professional teacher. It was therefore explicit that school practice is a pedagogical practice/ learning experience that entails putting all the classroom theory work into practice. It is a central pivot of professional training of teachers as it marks a transition from classroom to practice in a school setting in a student teachers' life (Rugyendo, 2011; Ssekamwa, 2001). School practice needs supervision in order to offer teacher trainees' pedagogical skills and developing their awareness of how students learn during school practice; it is the drive towards the education and training of competent and professional teachers (Ssekamwa, 2001).

Therefore, although people may vary in expression, school practice is an opportunity to explore potentials, weaknesses and strengths in imparting knowledge with the help of constant supervision. Grower *et al.*, (2005) argue that its aim is, usually, to improve the trainees' teaching skills and develop their awareness of how students learn. Indeed, school practice needs supervision in order to produce good results. From the findings, students enjoy SP because it is a time to go out of the University to practice what they have been taught and, especially, get used to actual/practical teaching.

Positive/ attributes of school practice supervision to competences

The findings indicate both positive and negative experiences, but the positive ones outweigh the negative ones (60%). On the positive side, school practice enables student teachers to translate all the theory they are taught in the classroom to practice. Student teachers spend much of their study time acquiring subject content in the classroom but during school practice they begin exposure to professional activities include classroom work with students, the preparation to teach well, being resourceful and creative under the guidance of the supervisor or the staff found at the school. In other words, apart from actual teaching, SP exposes student teachers to such professional activities that are part and parcel of teaching as a profession. Participant three (R3) expressed that,

> *school practice gave us an **o**pportunity to utilize various teaching methods and discover what works where and how.*

The student teachers consider it a blessing to try out and utilize various effective teaching methods under the supervision of an experienced teacher/lecturer. The lecturers also use SP for checks and balances as far as teaching is concerned. That is, through SP, the academic staff evaluates itself. To a greater extent, the way the student teachers teach reflects the way they were taught (Kasule, 2014). The SP results and reports contribute immensely to the improvement in handling teacher education. It is also a learning experience, both for the student teachers and the supervisors. It exposes them to the nature of schools that the student teachers go to and, eventually, gives them a general picture of the field for their clients – student teachers (Rugyendo, 2011).

The major aspect that featured in participants accounts were benefits in preparation and planning of lessons, lesson development and presentation, content knowledge transmission and linkage of activities to environment, classroom management, self-evaluation, exposure to professional activities and team spirit. These aspects were noted to have been embedded in the school practice assessment form (2018-2019). Perhaps the student teachers discovered the benefits derived from school practice basing on the particulars of the assessment form to which each is availed a copy at the end of each supervision session. One male participant (R1) said,

> *School practice equips one with values of preparing and planning lessons. The supervisor begins with asking about the scheme of work, lesson plan, record of work, record of marks and even a class register. Without them you can't progress with the lesson. Also, with supervision you have to be organized, use teaching aids and appropriate teaching methods. Least you can fail the exercise*.

This depicted that the benefits were expressed basing on the assessment criteria on the assessment form.

School practice offers student teachers an opportunity to explore their potential as far as teaching is concerned. They learn to prepare lessons and other efforts required to effectively deliver content to learners. With the help of supervision from the senior teachers and university lecturers they receive guidance and counselling to strengthen their teaching while the supervisors also get to evaluate themselves on the kind of training, they offer to student teachers. R2 expressed that,

> *the school practice equips one with professional values like planning and development of lessons, confidence building, team work and pedagogical skills regarding relating with learners…. even our lecturers get impressed when one does well.*

To some school practice offers student teachers an opportunity to begin their carrier in the teaching profession and to determine whether they were in the right place or not. It was explored that most student teachers discover themselves on the onset of practical teaching during school practice. They encounter various experiences, challenges and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses which onsets their journey to the teaching world as well as increasing their exposure and resilience to professional activities. This was explicit in R3's expression that,

> *school practice helped me to discover that I was soon becoming a teacher. I needed to perfect in preparation and organization of pedagogical documents and also enhancing my teaching abilities. I was able to develop a positive attitude to the teaching profession like how to relate with students, the school administration and the non-teaching staff.*

This was summarized by R4, mentioned exposure to various professional activities and hinted on personal development into the desired qualities of a teacher. She revealed that school practice provides an opportunity to student teachers to meet and interact with people from all walks of life beginning with the lecturers sent from the college because student teachers are supervised by not necessarily only the lecturers who teach them, but also others as long as they are the college staff or those that are in the school administration. They also meet other stakeholders such as learners as well as parents and well-wishers of the school. This offers them exposure to better ethical behavior, interpersonal relations, decision making, team work, delegation among others R4 expressed that,

> *I came to understand the way teachers should conduct themselves plus gain confidence to teach, to meet and interact with other important stakeholders, decision making, leadership skills, smartness, punctuality among others, I acquired and perfected.*

Therefore, the period of school practice is an indispensable item in the life of a learner and lecturer/ instructor (Rugyendo, 2011).

Collaboration and networking with others as a team is crucial in a student teacher's life. Student teachers on school practice learn to cohabit with others like staff members, supervisor (s), fellow student teachers, learners and non-staff. This could enhance confidence, expertise, communication skills and competence development (Smith & Lev-Avir, 2005).

While doing school practice, some student teachers perform autonomously with freedom to make decisions on the amount of content to be covered, teaching methods, aids and so on. This mostly happens where the host teachers take leave or decide to leave all the work to a student teacher after handing over the class. Such a situation enables some student teachers to discover themselves and their inner abilities. They develop self-awareness and emotional intelligence that makes them resourceful and innovative in their work and eventually professional activities. One female participant from the science department (R5) said that,

It also leads one to create a sense of responsibility for his/her students.

Participants acknowledged that school practice enables one to discover his/her soft skills for survival. Issues like communication, classroom management, how to deal with deviant behaviour, critical thinking, time management, stress management, ethical behavior and conflict resolution among others are central to teaching and learning. Thus, this is the time when student teachers learn and require soft skills like self-restraint, socialization, dialogue and self-presentation to make a good teacher (Kauchak, & Eggen, 2002). If one is able to handle classroom management at SP, then he/she may make a very good teacher. In case some get the opportunity to be mentored, it strengthens them into the profession.

Challenges

This part discusses the challenging experiences for the University itself, the school staff, the students and from the general teaching.

During preparation in the university lecture rooms, student teachers are exposed to both general methods and subject methods of teaching. General methods are those that can be used by all to deliver content in all subjects for instance explanation, questions and answers among others. Subject methods are those that are only suitable for a specific subject like in science there is experiment, demonstration among others. This comes as a result of disciplinary variations but the students found it very hard to select and apply all the teaching methods as taught by various lecturers. One participant (R2) said,

Each lecturer teaches the methods needed by students in his/her respective subject and also each lecturer has his/ her own way of teaching but in school practice one may be supervised by a lecturer not necessarily from his/ her discipline.

However, to boost their methodology and general knowledge about teaching, participants acknowledged the need to have a general course on teaching methods to cover part of what some lack in subject specific methods taught by respective subject lecturers.

Regarding supervision, participants echoed the challenge of limited feedback and conferencing from the supervisors. Perhaps that explains why some participants understood school practice not as a learning activity but an assessment/examination.

Revelation emerged that 50 % of the supervisors merely enter the class, write a report and hand it to the students, and leave immediately. R1 said that she did not get such an opportunity of conferencing with almost all her supervisors except one. She recounted:

Some supervisors were very biased and unprofessional. They were so tough and would sit quietly and award marks without any discussion or comments because they would be in a hurry going to other stations. I thought I had failed because I did not get the chance to share anything with the supervisor apart from him giving me the assessment form.

Again, students were demoralised due to the fact that they missed the professional touch of the supervisor to guide them on lesson development from the start to finish. The study also reveals that there were some supervisors who would come at the end of the lesson but proceed to make a report. The scheme of work and the lesson plan require a step-by-step development of the lesson to meet the desired objectives. The student teachers who expressed this challenge found it very challenging and unprofessional for the supervisor to make such an assessment because the supervisor only saw a small part of the teaching. To assess the lesson better, one must see its progress from the beginning to an end. R4 said,

Most lecturers stay in class for a short time i.e. not up to the end of the lesson; like me the lecturer spent with me thirty minutes and another lesson ten minutes; there was no conferencing she just told me that: "go I will come next week", but even never showed up again.

Supervision is put in jeopardy without the supervisor following all the lesson development and then conferencing with the student teacher to discuss the genuine strength and weaknesses of the lesson taught. Supervision from the start to finish enables both the supervisor and the student teacher to agree with justifications on the areas of

improvement. Without seeing the whole lesson process on classroom performance and then be able to give feedback, how does such a supervisor expect the student teacher to be guided for improvement?

School practice supervision is not an assessment where there is a marking guide and the supervisor just uses a red pen and then runs away without conferencing with the student teacher (Rugyendo, 2011). Verbal communication is very significant to point out/ appreciate the strong areas, and those that need to be improved by at least a word of wisdom from an experienced lecturer. This motivates, guides and counsels the student teacher to become competent and justifies the fact that Supervision should be in and out of class (Botha& Onwu, 2013). By giving an opportunity for individualized attention and support, school practice helps to break down hierarchical structures and creates leadership from within (MOES, 2007).

More so, lecturers differ in practical teaching competences and student teachers are normally supervised by all teaching staff; both those who directly teach the students and those who do not necessarily teach them. Discovery was made that whereas some lecturers were professional in their supervision, others were not. It was explicit that some supervisors would come at the end of the lesson but go ahead to make a report while other lecturers supervised by phone calls in their hotel rooms and awarded marks. Majority fail to follow the school timetables as they show up at their convenient time and prefer student teachers arranging short lessons with the senior staff. Preferably they tell them to organise single lessons (30 -40 minutes). This impacts on lesson developments in lesson plans and on timetables of the respective schools. R6 said,

> *The supervisor saw all the five of us in one day, he told us to organise single lessons of forty minutes each but some he would see only for 30 minutes due to limited time.*

Asked whether this did not lead to conflicts in the school time table, he replied,

> *We had to arrange lessons with the school teachers because if you fail, you never know the lecturer may not return.*

Some supervisors failed to begin the exercise on schedule and started when the exercise was soon ending thereby inconveniencing the school term programmes because that's the time when students are nearing or in examination period. It may culminate into conflicts between the student teachers, the staff and the administration. This depicts inadequate cooperation between the supervisor and the student teacher and calls for the supervisor to be rational, empathetic and objective. R5 echoed this with disgrace that,

> *The supervisors came when the term was almost ending and this was past teaching time. May be this was because that school was far away from Kampala! I was seen once but up to now can't figure out that was my performance*.

This contravenes Onen, *et al.,* (2016), stresses that "the supervisor is principally concerned with helping teachers to achieve the best outcomes of instruction by means of guidance and evaluator activities; assisting teachers in overcoming their problems; organizing in-service programs…enforcing regulations…rewarding good performance.

Student teachers complained of teachers supervising them without content knowledge of their own subject matter.

Some student teachers are discontented with being supervised by lecturers who are of different subjects from theirs. They feel that such supervisors may not be rich in content knowledge of their subject and therefore may fail to assess them objectively. R6 was a student teacher in History but says she was supervised by a Fine Art lecturer who could not assess her well due to the fact that he was not conversant with the teaching of History as she recounts,

> *I was supervised by Mr.… and he lectures Fine Art and maybe he expected me to use more Maps, pictures and others as my teaching aids but I was teaching the Portuguese on the East African Coast and used only the map and taught with clear facts. He underrated my lesson and almost failed me.*

However, teaching principles and concepts involve imparting knowledge for lifelong learning. Philosophical minds will automatically be able to analyze good pragmatic actions out of the teaching that involves good methods and skills. Therefore, this challenge left a lot to be desired.

Some student teachers attributed their weak performance to lack of instructional material both from the University and the school of practice. The University is expected to provide school practice teaching materials like scheme books, manilla papers, markers among others, but these are always insufficient and students are forced to improvise yet many may not afford them having paid for them at the University. Equally so, most unfortunate some schools lack educational materials like good blackboards, chalk, textbooks for refences, maps and others. R12 complained that,

> *The University does not fulfil all its obligations to provide the school practice materials; like they give out insufficient manilla papers for charts yet every lesson needs a teaching aid for illustrations to be successful, because the supervisor always asks you that, where are your teaching aids?*

At school level, student teachers also expressed some challenges with the administration, the teaching staff, students and teaching. There is limited collaboration between the host teachers and students especially in privately owned schools. Majoni and Nyaruwata (2015) assert that the host teacher should mentor the student teachers in addition to the supervisor's work. However, because of lack of a structure in mentoring pre-service

teachers in the whole country in Uganda, senior teachers don't bother unless it is on personal grounds. Most of them exhibit to be busy and preoccupied with their classes and should not be pestered unnecessarily.

It was also noted that many student teachers were given a big load than they should have teach. Some schools especially private schools which pay wages consider school practice period as a time to save the school from the burden of paying salaries and make some reasonable profit. Consequently, student teachers are made to shoulder the burden of relieving some teachers of their teaching load. In other instances, notably in public school the host teachers take sabbatical leave and leave the student teachers in charge of their classes. For courtesy, student teachers are required to stay at the host school up to the end of second term even when the school practice exercise has long ended. However, this is normally exploited by the host teachers to leave all the work of teaching, setting and marking examinations to complete the term. R4 recounted that,

> *We were given much work. They added more periods to us and we had no time of rest; that is what made me hate SP.*

In some schools, especially private schools where wages are paid per hour, student teachers are not very welcome by the senior teachers because the more lessons a teacher teaches the more pay, he/she receives. Therefore, the coming of student teachers meant that their periods were reduced or taken away completely! This created a poor and challenging working relationship between the student teachers and the host teachers.

Some students highlighted issues about poor school infrastructure and teaching facilities like lack of furniture, chalk, use of rough chalk boards among others. This was coupled with accommodation related challenges. Some student teachers are forced to rent outside the school premises due to scarcity of staff quarters and they experience late coming, insecurity, slums, unhygienic conditions and very expensive charges. This had an effect on their teaching.

Views of participants on how school practice could be improved

R6 expressed the need for the University to establish close/ interdependent relationships with the host school practice institutions so as to deal with some of the school related challenges notably big workloads in some subjects, timetabling, mentoring student teachers as well as their welfare and other logistics like descent accommodation among others. Recurring in the account given by R9 was that University supervisors should work closely with the attached teachers as a team to support each other in the supervisory role of the student teachers. She said that,

> *Both the supervisor, the student and the mentors/ responsible teachers should support each other from the process of orientation to the end. In some instances, if the*

responsible teacher could first see and supervise the student teacher to assess the teaching before the university supervisor comes, this would be very good.

Supervisors' feedback/conferencing with the student teachers was also echoed by the participants' expressions. R3 & R12 said that conferencing could be vital if the supervisor is human and empathetic to point out the strength and weaknesses of the lesson. It is a time when a student teacher and the supervisor discuss the lesson taught pointing out strengths and weaknesses. During conferencing, the student teacher and the supervisor should agree on areas of improvement and also the supervisor should make a follow up appearance. Without conferencing with the student teacher at the end of the lesson, there is no supervision done. It is a time when they agree with justifications, on the areas of improvement (Rugyendo, 2011). Rugyendo goes on to say that, word of wisdom from an experienced person would be of great help at such material time in the teaching and learning exercise. It is also noted that by Onen, *et al*, (2016), that, without feedback their performance does not improve. Feedback on a classroom performance frequently takes the form of a supervisor's comments after the lesson is over. Supervisors need to discuss with the students and properly guide them. This would provide an opportunity to develop growth plans that lead the student teacher to develop or hone his/her teaching skills. R2 suggested this could be done weekly for efficiency and effectiveness.

The above view goes with R4 suggesting the need for a cordial working relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee. He expressed that professional ethics, such as, patience, following supervision procedures and processes should be promoted. Supervisors ought to be empathetic and humane as they work with their student teachers. They should try to control their personal temptations notably intimacy and personal relationships with the student teachers. R8 noted that, some supervisors rebuked student teachers Infront of their students. Onen, *et al.,* (2016), says that, it is better for a supervisor to look for a convenient place and point out areas that need to be improved or appreciate, verbally the student teacher for the job well done. However, majority of the supervisors just hurriedly give comments while standing and pretending to be time bad as said by R3 that,

The supervisor was rushing and promised to return but failed.

Participants also suggested the need for several supervisors basing on their areas of specialization to cater for methods required to deliver lessons in different disciplines. This is to avoid lack of relevant knowledge of the subject matter and minimizing bias, suspicion and dissatisfaction. In the school practice assessment form (2018-2019), the third part requires the supervisor to assess the student teacher on the amount of, the scope of content covered, mastery of content and the appropriate and relevancy of the content R2 said that,

> *At most science and arts courses could be catered for each as a cluster in every school while deploying supervisors to ensure that content delivered is appropriate as well as the assessment.*

R7 suggested the need to teach General Methods as a comprehensive course unit to all students who study education course to equip all of them with similar methods that can be grasped by all not individual lecturers within their disciplines. To him and R10, this would foster a uniform way of planning and preparation of lessons, lesson development among others. However, this idea was received with reservations due interdisciplinary variation in teaching and learning of science and arts subjects.

Participant's' views pointed to the need for a collaborative school practice exercise between the universities and the host schools. R1 said that,

> *A collaborative school practice exercise between the university and the school practice host institutions is highly treasured for efficient and effective school practice exercise. A cordial relationship between a lecturer, host teacher and the student teacher could foster partnership and networking aimed at seeing the novice teacher gain the skills for effective teaching and learning as well as grounded professionalism.*

Twoli (2011) emphasize that collaboration between the school practice institution and the host schools would promote effective mentoring and supervision for effective acquisition of the required skills and competence development. The findings and recommendations of participants revealed a set of practices which need to be established in the University as enablers to translate school practice from the traditional model to the collaborative model and unlock the latent capacity of school practice as a practical teaching learning experience. This framework could enhance future strategic direction not only for Makerere University but also other teacher preparation institutions to be more responsive to the emerging competence based pedagogical approaches for sustainable development in education. I present the framework of collaborative School practice in Figure 1

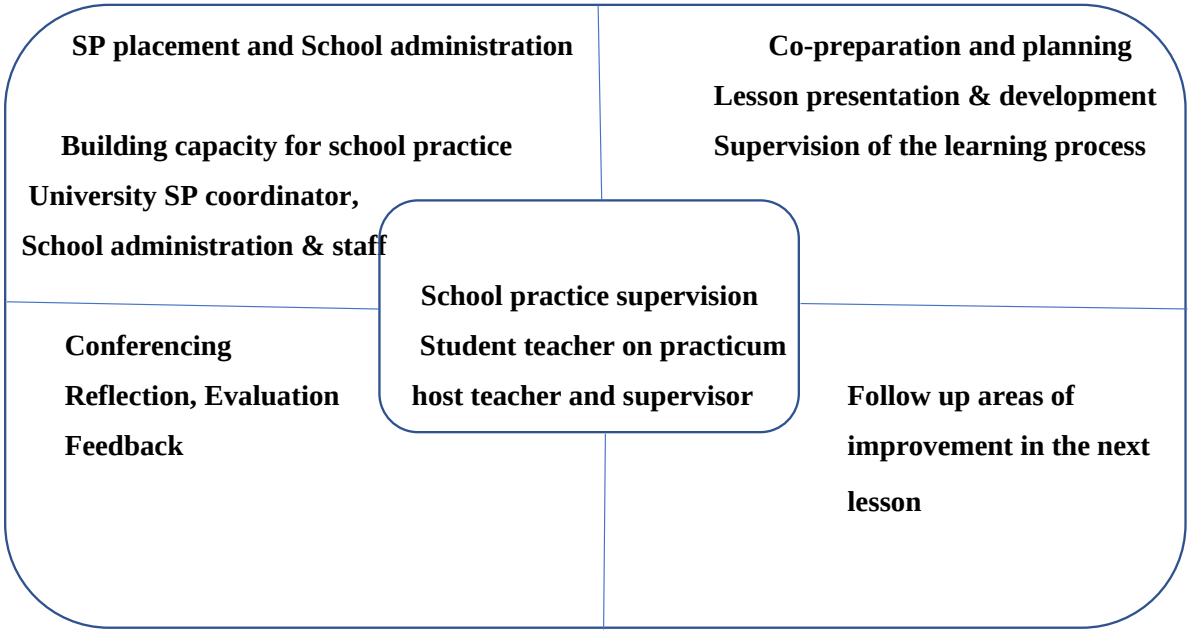

Figure 1*: Framework of Collaborative School Practice Supervision Model (CSP) Enablers.*

Source: Researchers Development.

The thesis behind the framework of collaborative school practice supervision enablers is that effective school practice supervision requires an interdependent relationship between the student teacher and the supervisor with the help of a mentor /cooperating teacher. School practice as an integral exercise in teacher preparation requires joint efforts to make it a learning experience and at the same time a training experience to equip the student with knowledge and skills required and expected of a competent teacher. Both the lecturer, the host teacher and the student teacher need to be involved at each stage so that teaching can be enhanced from the start and by the end learning can be achieved. Collaboration should start with preparation and planning, then the implementation in the classroom and finally reflection and evaluation. The follow up process in regard to areas of improvement should set pace for the subsequent lessons. The collaborative school practice supervision enablers are explained in details in the following segments.

School practice Supervision

School practice supervision is an internship process intended to equip the student teacher with the necessary practical teaching skills and competence in giving relevant

information, giving the guidance, motivation and environment with positive interaction with students in a controlled classroom situation. It helps the student teacher to develop the abilities and interests in teaching and learning, to seek to satisfy the needs of student by providing the necessary and relevant information to the students and provides vital feedback in reflecting on teaching tasks. Supervision by an expert teacher provides practical advice on classroom procedures and on the ways of creating maximum utilization of facilities at any given classroom situation. The feedback in forms of regular conferencing, and assessments becomes part and partial of teaching practice and essential component in evaluation of the learning process. A student teacher on school practice should participate in both the classroom and extra-curricular activities. School practice enables the student teacher to cope with the new environment and meet the challenges of the upcoming teaching profession requirements.

School practice supervision occupies a key position in the program of pre service teacher education because it marks a transition from classroom to practice, from theory to practice in a school setting. It is the central pivot of professional training of teachers and thus should be given the attention it deserves,

Given the significance of school practice and the place it holds in a student teachers' life in pre service teacher education, there is need to adopt current models of practice that foster the production of competent teachers who would easily cope with the dynamism of the times. Collaboration in school practice supervision could offer opportunities for growth and acquisition of skills through dialogue, reflection together and enhanced practice.

Collaboration in Preparation and planning

Lecturers should provide guidance and direction on making the scheme of work required for the school practice supervision session. Both the lecturer, the intern teacher and the host teacher could plan together for instance the lesson plan should be made involving the input of the moderator clearly defining the objectives, methods, teaching aids and the stages of lesson development and presentation activities. The lesson notes could also be prior observed to check the appropriateness and relevance of content to the students. According to the schedule of teaching practice this could be done during orientation period when lecturers collect time tables and during the ongoing exercise itself. Such preparation acquaints both parties with lesson expectations and familiarizes the lecturer with the fourth coming activities of the lesson. This means that both will have the zeal to provide their best to the lesson.

Lesson development and presentation

This could be the implementation stage of the collaborative arrangement where both parties proceed to the classroom for the actual communication and activities of the lesson.

The supervisor usually gives advice to the student teacher after observing the lesson being taught. He/ she should be friendly, democratic and foster a collegial atmosphere free from threats and tension. The comments are based on the student teacher's genuine good performance as well as on his weaknesses. The comments should be ideal and appropriate reflecting what exactly transpired during the lesson proceedings.

Reflection, Evaluation and feedback process

It is a time when a student teacher and the supervisor reflect on the lesson taught pointing out strengths and weaknesses together. It is a time when together with the host teacher could agree with justifications, on the performance and areas of improvement. A word of wisdom from the lecturer as an experienced person would be of great help at such material time in the teaching and learning exercise to both the host teacher and the student teacher (Rugyendo, 2011). It is also noted that, without feedback their performance does not improve because the supervisors' comments guide the intern teacher to the next phase of the exercise (R5). Many scholars refer to this as conferencing with the novice teacher while philosophical scholars refer to it as pedagogies of dialogue (Walker, 2006). It is the supervision out of class. It is better for a supervisor to look for a convenient place and point out areas that need to be improved or appreciate, verbally the student teacher strong points for the job well done (Rugyendo, 2011). The student teacher may be required to record some of the supervisors' observations in a special book called observation book or in a certain section of his special method notebook. If such books are not available, then the teacher may record the observations in his own way if he considers them of value to him. The novice should also ask question and together they evaluate all the activities of the lesson to come up with right assessment marks.

Follow up/ areas of improvement in the next lesson

A student teacher requires at least to be supervised three to four times at an interval of three days to one week (Makerere University, 2018). In supervision, there should be a progression where a student is expected to improve day by day depending on what has been assessed. If one comes once and does all the assessment, there is no opportunity for the student teacher to improve progressively, owing to lack of constant assessment.

This collaboration frame work may require reforms in the current practices, new roles, work structures and ultimately new rewards and recognition systems. It is applicable to all teacher preparation institutions as school practice is a prerequisite to one becoming a professional teacher.

Conclusion

School practice contributes greatly to teacher education because it is the time for experiment in practical teaching. It is the central pivot of professional training of teachers as student teachers get an opportunity to translate theory into practice with the help of supervisors. Through an effective SP, the student teachers develop competences and exposure to the teaching profession. Equally so, the supervisors reflect and assess themselves on what has been theoretically taught and grasped. Universities ought to give it the predominant attention it deserves. This could be enshrined in improving the negative experiences both at the university and the host school practice institutions and hence a need for recommendations from the study.

Recommendations

1. The University as a teacher preparation institution needs an interdependent relationship with the school practice host schools. The school cooperating teachers are needed to induct the student teachers into the school culture through encouraging, supporting, motivation and mentoring them into professionalism. This relationship should start at policy level by the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports (MoE&S) through the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). Once it is officially recognized as a school practice policy, the cooperation between the university lecturer and the school practice host teacher will be efficient and effective. Senior teachers also will be encouraged to take part in nurturing the novice teachers. More so, the challenges at school level will be jointly solved with the university's involvement for example teaching load, accommodation among others.

2. Universities in Uganda, Makerere University inclusive should deal with the weaknesses/challenges associated with school practice notably lack of conferencing. Supervisors should have time with student teachers as an opportunity to develop growth plans that lead the student to the required skills. Weekly feedbacks and periodic reviews are necessary from the supervisors by the university administration. The university should provide at least two supervisors per student teacher. For instance, one can supervise for three or four weeks, and the other can take the same period on the same student. This could solve the weaknesses of relying on one supervisor in an area throughout the entire school practice exercise.

3. The methods of teaching should be handled with much care to minimize the challenges arising from the use of teaching aids, lesson planning and preparation, classroom management, assessment and evaluation. Methods should be made standard to promote uniformity in either sciences or arts subjects.

4. Probably, supervisors are forced to hurry reports and school practice exercise due to poor facilitation. The supervisors should be well facilitated and supervised by the sending

institutions to do good and articulate supervision as this translates into competence of student teachers.

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