

An Evaluation of Teaching in Kenya

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Abstract The aim and purpose of this paper is focusing on effective teaching and teaching practice perspective with a view to providing insight into its concept, dimensions, models, objectives, roles and suggest the way forward. Teaching is a complex activity. Its mastery requires systematic training. In Kenya, teacher education institutes have developed a teacher education component referred to as teaching practice which is used to provide pedagogical competence and professional experience to novice teachers. Through teaching practice student teachers are required to do actual teaching in the classroom, solve problems that arise during the lessons and assess learning outcomes. There is of course, no substitute for teaching practice. Teaching practice occupies a key position in the programme of teacher education. It is a culminating experience in teacher preparation. It provides opportunity to beginning teachers to become socialized into the profession. Student teaching, or practice teaching, is the chance for prospective teachers to get into a classroom, be in charge, lesson plan and experience what it is like to have a classroom of students to be responsible for, all under the supervision of a more experienced teacher. A student teaching experience can be positive and beneficial, full of lessons learned, or negative and unhelpful. Teaching practice is an embedded and essential, component of any teacher education programme in Kenya.

Keywords Education, Learner, Practice, Teaching

1. Introduction

Teaching is one of the most delightful and exciting of all human activities when it is done well but it can be one of the humiliating and tedious exercises when it is done poorly[1]. Good teaching is a product of strenuous practice and considerable experience, which starts right at period the teaching practice starts[2].

The role of teaching practice in inculcating quality teaching in student teachers cannot be exaggerated since it is as essential to a teacher as internship is to a doctor or apprenticeship to an engineer or to a lawyer[3]. It must therefore be given the emphasis it deserves in a teacher education programme.

2. The Concept Teaching Practice

Since the concept of teaching is not clear in the minds of many people, it is necessary to define it before delving in the role teaching practice plays in teacher education[1]. Teaching is a complex activity which includes proactive decision making process during planning, designing and preparing teaching materials; interaction between the teacher and the learners; and protective redirection which includes Evaluation, redesign and dissemination. From this definition

it can be noted that being a complex activity teaching involves proactive, interactive and proactive phases which a student teacher ought to learn how to master during teaching practice period.

Teaching always attempts to alter student's understanding, so that he or she begins to conceptualize phenomena and ideas in the way subject experts conceptualize them[1]. It is supposed to bring about changes in behaviour. In order for teaching to be successful, it has to satisfy a number of requirements, for example, be methodical, be planned, be a result of resourcefulness on the part of the teacher, be activity- based, be related to the learners experience and to life, and be able to follow a logical sequence[3]. This calls for systematic induction into teaching through teaching practice episodes.

Teaching practice refers to a situation in which a teacher in training teaches a group of students under supervision. It involves the preparation, actual teaching and assessment of learning outcome. These are the key professional activities of a teacher and the ones which a student teacher has to practically learn how to perform[4]. Teaching practice is usually carried out by student teachers in schools under the supervision of lecturers and cooperating teachers. It is aimed at exposing a student teacher to the professional life of a school both inside and outside the classroom.

The importance of teaching practice emerges when a student with substantive knowledge moves to the other side of the desk to practice, and finds that he or she is in a difficulty because of lack of classroom experience.

2.1. Scope of Teaching Practice

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There are many dimensions from which teaching practice can be viewed and its place in teacher preparation determined[2]. From a philosophical dimension, teaching practice can be viewed in terms of the relationship between theory and practice. For instance, the idealist and realist schools of thought of speculative philosophy assert that a teaching process should be carefully thought out and the content presented step by step to enable learners to comprehend the abstract concepts and principles which the physical world manifests[2]. The idealists add that since teaching is a complex activity, it should be practiced in small scale episodes in order to enable student teachers to develop the ability to prepare and present lessons step by step and also be able to assess learner performance effectively by each lesson.

2.2. From a Sociological Dimension

Teaching practice can be viewed in terms of tension between the tendency for the training institutions to advocate innovation and experimentation and the tendency of schools of practice to be preoccupied with day to day operations and routines to maintain the status quo. The question is, "Should teaching practice socialize students into a status quo which may be in dire need for change?" From sociological point of view teaching practice plunges a student teacher in to an institution, the school, which operates as a social organism and which requires him or her to contribute to the wellbeing of the organization and the attainment of its objectives. A student teacher therefore has to learn how to live, fit, socialize, interact, and co-operate with members of the school community. The student teacher has also to view the classroom as a dynamic social organization in which network of relationship exists and learn how to take advantage of the situation. The student teacher is also expected to be aware of the school-community interaction and find out how to exploit what the community can offer for teaching in the school.

2.3. From a Pedagogical Point of View

Teaching practice is seen in terms of how to prepare students in advance for their classroom instructional experience and how to teach a class in such a way that leads to maximum learning and personnel development[18]. From this dimension the focus is on teaching in the classroom which includes preparation, implementation and assessment of learning outcome

2.4. From a Psychological Dimension

Teaching practice anchors on two theories of transfer. These are the general principles theory and the identical elements theory[6]. The general principles theory states that general principles acquired by the learners in one activity may be transferred and utilized in a new activity. Various research findings subscribe to this theory. The research found that professional knowledge had proved to be a predictor of teaching in performance[3]. In her findings,

correlates of efficiency in teaching were knowledge of the subject, academic qualifications, sincerity in teaching, mode of teaching, the general principles theory explains why institutions concerned devote a big portion of the training period to the teaching of concepts, principles and facts. This is done in the hope that the learners will transfer what has been acquired to various situations during classroom teaching.

The identical elements theory states that transfer of learning from one task to the learning of a subsequent one occurs only to the extent that the two tasks have identical elements. While subscribing to this theory, in order to encourage transfer, there should be a carefully planned series of small steps where the subject from one field of learning is modified slowly until the knowledge and skills gained are used in another field where there is analogous relationship. In training for teaching for instance, student teachers acquire knowledge in subject disciplines and in professional courses.

They also develop cognitive and manipulative skills, design and produce instructional materials. They are expected to apply these acquired knowledge and competence in actual classroom teaching.

3. Models of Teaching practice

Several educationists have analysed teaching practice models and identified theoretical models and problems associated with each of them. Four such teaching practice theoretical models are: observation craft models, Teacher Aid Programme (TAP), Demonstration Teacher Lesson (DTL) and micro-teaching model (peer teaching).

3.1. Apprentice model

Teaching practices is viewed as a process of apprenticeship in which a student teacher is encouraged to view teaching as a craft. In the model the novice teacher would be attached to an experienced teacher to observe his or her lessons and other forms of classroom management for a long period of time. The explicit intention of this orientation is that beginning teachers can learn to become teachers and/or learn to teach through observing and working in schools with experienced teachers. It is believed that this would enable them to become good apprentices, because they would be given the opportunity to observe lessons taught by master teachers and craft-knowledge through being involved in the daily activities of a practicing teacher[20]. After a while the student teacher would be allowed to prepare lesson plans and teach while modelling the master teachers.

While this model has its merits it has heavily criticized for a number of its shortcomings, for instance, whilst it has been said to allow beginning teachers to build a repertoire of teaching skills as well as gain craft knowledge. It does not necessary guarantee that beginning teachers prepared through it will be able to make a proper judgement about what ought to be done in difficult situations or unexpected teaching circumstances. It looks most probable that teachers

trained by use of this model are not prepared adequately to grapple with problems and changes that will be occurring during the teaching career.

The other weakness associated with this model is that, the mentor teachers though experienced are not necessary effective teachers and their lessons worthy of being regarded as model lessons. In recent times some universities in Kenya have attempted to re-introduce this model and it was soon discovered that most mentor (co-operating) teachers did not have superior professional qualifications above those being pursued by student teachers. It was also noted that not all mentor teachers were specialists in the same subjects as the notice teachers.

It was realized further that in most schools the cooperating teachers evaded being observed when teaching by student teachers.

They instead handed over their classes to student teachers and receded to the background, only visiting the classes occasionally. But even where efficient and experienced cooperating teachers were to be found there was the risk of him or her acting as a drill sergeant" whose orders had to be observed and obeyed to the letter. This is likely to encourage imitation of mentor teachers' unquestioning maintenance of the *status quo* if the methodologies they are outmoded. This would not allow room for rejection on the lessons and actions of their mentor teachers.

It is these constraints that make educationists rather cautious about suggestions such as posting students to school and attaching them to experienced classroom teachers who would serve as their supervisors and mentors. Even the other related approach of posting student teachers to schools after completing university studies and handing them over to school inspectors and cooperating teachers to supervise their lesson and award marks would still be a disastrous move unless there is adequate selection, training and motivation of the inspectors and mentor teachers.

With changing educational goal after independence, innovation ideas and methods have been experimented with in the training of teachers. Researchers in other parts of the world have also availed new ideas in the attempt to train more competent teachers. Models such as the *teacher Aid Programme* have been experimented by researchers. In this model, student teacher were required to spend hours in a neighbouring school observing more experienced teachers in classroom teaching, the student teacher would spend some of the hours teaching too. This model of course is quite similar to the observation apprenticeship model discussed above. However I TAP, the cooperating teacher is at least defined as an experienced professional who should also supervise and comment on the student teacher's limited hours of teaching.

At any rate model would still involve more financial costs in transporting large number of student teacher to schools were they make observations or paying money to cater for their own subsistence and boarding. Since this model poses problems of administration to the schools of practice. Since this model offers opportunity for students teachers to practice teaching in the classroom under the supervision of

an experienced and professionally qualified teacher, it is an improvement over the observation model.

4. Demonstration Teacher Lesson Model

Researchers have also developed the demonstration teacher lesson model[5]. This was really developed to fulfil the desire for a situation traumatic enough to underscore the complexity of teaching. The trainee would face a carefully selected small class of role playing students, ranging from among others, the troublesome, the slow witted, the know it all and *I don't care type*. The novice teacher would teach them, and deal with the diversity of problems brought about by each of them. While this model at least recognizes and attempts to tackle the complexities of teaching by recognition of character verity in a leaning situation, it still fell far short of providing adequate training for teaching complacency., it actually does more to harass the student teacher than provide him or her with a meaningful situation where he can develop his skills of teaching. In place where this model was experimented with it failed miserably and left student teacher with traumatic and unforgettable experiences.

4.1. Micro- Teaching Model

The other model of teaching practice is micro- teaching which may be modified to peer teaching[16]. Micro-teaching through attractive can hardly be practiced in its original form as a scaled down real teaching in which the novice teacher teaches few students about 6, instead of 45, in a contrived time of about 5 minutes, instead of 40 minutes and focusing on practicing a single specific skill such as questioning' instead of wide range of them. This is too strenuous for the Kenyan teacher education situation today where there is a very large enrolment, shortage of room space, lecturers, technical staff and equipment. If micro- teaching is modified to a level of peer teaching where student teachers prepare and teach each other in turn, in large classes of about 25 students, over a longer period of 10 minutes, focusing on two or more skills such as questioning and reinforcement and providing of immediate feedback, the model would be seen as variable. The only caution is that it should not be taken as replacement for teaching practice in schools but as a preparation for teaching practice which comes at a large stage in a teacher education programme.

4.2. The advantage of Peer Teaching

This provides students with the opportunity to make and correct their mistakes without causing any disadvantages to the learners since it is carried out with peer[13]. It however provides a chance for real practice in teaching. The model offers the opportunity to prepare a micro – lesson plan, teaching media, strategies for lesson delivery real teaching assessment of the lesson and receiving immediate feedback. It enables the participation to observe teaching problem, closely examine them and make realistic attempt to solve them. It enables student teacher to engage in self evaluation

thus learn how to assess their future lessons. Peer teaching therefore has an important place in teaching education and should be given a chance in the programme.

5. Teaching Practice in African

In the most Kenyan universities practice is considered as a core component of teacher education programme. It is viewed as the dynamic phase and climax of the programme. It instils professional discipline in the student teacher since they have to observe the code of ethics of the teaching profession while teaching in schools. Teaching practice also provides a vital link between teacher education institutions and school which leads to a shared responsibility in the preparation of teachers.

5.1. Schematic Framework

Several schematic models have been developed for systematic implementation of teacher education programme in various educational institutions. Most of the models have similar elements[7]. The model commonly used in the facilities of education in Kenyan universities which is focused on teaching practice is illustrated below:

At the first student education in the universities are taught course in two teaching subjects such as mathematics, history, Kiswahili, Music art and design, biology, chemistry and physics. These are the subjects which each student is expected to master and teach in secondary school. Parallel to the teaching of subjects each student is required to take foundation course in education such as history of education, philosophy of education, psychology of education, economics of education, curriculum development, educational administration and educational planning.

At the second stage students embark on courses that directly prepare them for the teaching practice exercise. Each student is required to take course in general methods of teaching and methods of teaching specific subjects such as geography, history, mathematics and biology. Students are also required to take course in education technology and media practicals. Before embarking on teaching practice, each student engages in peer teaching often budded micro-teaching in order to introduce them to the science and art of teaching.

The third stage in the model concerns actual teaching experience in school classrooms. Each student is required to teach two different subjects in the school curriculum where the or she is doing teaching practice. Teaching practice aims at giving the student teacher the opportunity to consolidate the principles, theories and factors acquired at the University and apply them in a classroom teaching situation. Each student teacher is assessed when teaching at least three times in each subject totalling a maximum of six supervisions for the two subjects. The purposes of teaching, is to develop teaching competence, professional orientation, discipline, self concept and self confidence.

The fourth step in the model is the provision of

supervisory feedback. The feedback session is a meeting between the supervisor and a student-teacher which occurs at the end of the lesson. What is really discussed focuses on the events of the lesson observed and is related to what was observed during the teaching process. It is aimed at providing immediate feedback for purposes of improving in preparation for teaching, actual teaching and assessment of the outcome.

6. Roles of a Teaching Practice

Teaching practice has a vital role to play in the transformation of a student from an academician into a professionally qualified teacher[12]. This is therefore essential that teacher education programmes at all levels whether they are producing teachers for pre-schools, primary schools or secondary schools, incorporate teaching practices as a key component. The importance of teaching practice has been stated in very many forums in the region. In Botswana the Minister of Education aptly emphasized the importance of teaching practice as follows:

Indeed, teaching practice is the dynamic phase of teacher preparation because the student teacher is provided with the opportunity of practically synthesizing and applying in a real situation the theoretical learning that has been provided throughout the teacher preparation programme

Throughout the history of teacher education in Kenya, teaching practice has been equally given prominence as the core component of teacher education programme. At independence the Kenya Education Commission viewed teaching practice as a crucial exercise in a teacher training programme and recommended that teachers colleges should conduct teaching practice for duration of twelve weeks equivalent to one school term[2]. The importance of teaching practice in the training of teachers in Kenya continued to gain strength as pointed out by subsequent committees, commissions and working parties on education such as the National Committee on Education Objectives and Policies[2]. Out of these publicly instituted committees, the one which was most crucial and very elaborate on the important role of teaching practice was the committee on the review of Graduate Teacher Education[4]. The committee pointed out that the role of the universities was to produce competent and well-trained teachers for the education student teachers to have on the spot professional training and experience in applying the teaching methods they have learnt at university.

Teaching practice has a pivotal place in teacher education because it focuses on techniques basic to classroom management skills, classroom sensitivity to effective interaction particularly in the use of language and communication skills[5]. It is possible to learn a lot about teaching by discussing it and talking about it in terms of planning techniques, materials, assessment and effective use of communication skills, but it is not possible to master teaching skills without practically doing it.

6.1. It is Just as Practical as Swimming

One cannot learn swimming without plunging into the swimming pool and since plunging at the deep end of the pool is dangerous, it is advisable that beginners start at the shallow end[9]. In teaching the equivalent of staring from a shallow end is starting by teaching peers who are familiar people right at the college in a less demanding situation where one can afford to make mistakes and get them corrected without disadvantaging those being taught. It must also be stressed that it is one thing to be able to describe what one is able to do in a lesson when he/she is expected to lecture without interruption and it is quite another to carry it out when it includes a group of students who expect the teacher to allow them to interrupt the lesson by asking questions and raising various issues. There are obviously huge benefits in being able to try out things before hand in a supportive atmosphere.

Teaching practice benefits student teachers as follows

- It enables student teachers to synthesize facts and theories learned in various courses at the university and apply them in a teaching – learning situation.
- It provided student teachers with the opportunity to try out various teaching techniques acquired teaching competence and develop their own teaching styles.
- It provides opportunity for students to plan, prepare and practice teaching in a real classroom situation under the guidance of professional supervisors.
- It exposes student teachers to focus on the needs of learners, to sensitize them to the problem which may hinder learning and help them to develop the ability to overcome the problem.
- It provided opportunity for student teacher to learn how to assess and evaluate learner performance and provide feedback to pupils, school administration and parents.
- It provided opportunity for student teacher to have their teaching competence assessed and constructively criticized through positive feedback under sympathetic conditions.
- It exposes student teacher to school life in its entirety and participate in all school activities including those that link it with life in its wider environment.
- It instils professional discipline, develop confidence and create a sense of responsibility in student teachers.
- It encouraged student teacher to develop criteria for self evaluation.

7. Problem Facing Teaching Practice

Even though teaching is considered an essential and crucial component of teacher education programme it is still faced with myriads of problems. The problem is identified by the committee on the Review of teacher education in Kenya way back in 1979 are still valid today[14].

These are outlined as follows:-

- Reluctance of school heads to give trainees opportunity to do learning in their schools and in some classes.
- Conditions for teaching practice being far from

favourable, thus imposing intolerable burden on all those who try to fulfil their teaching practice obligations.

- Teaching practice not being regarded by the university as being very important.
- Lack of enthusiasm and so much cynicism among student teacher about teaching as a career.
- Timing of teaching practice to take place in third term.
- Period for conducting teaching practice being too short..
- Methodologies of teaching having very low status and not given enough time and attention.
- Structural links between micro-teaching and teaching practice being vague.
- Student teachers being not adequately prepared for teaching practice.
- The massive arrangement for teaching in scattered secondary schools having a reduced effect on supervision.
- Supervision of student on teaching practice being inadequate.

The way forward for teaching practice in Kenya

From the discussion given in the paper, teaching practice emerges as an essential core unit in the teacher education programme. Its central role is transforming an academic into a professional is not in doubt. The way forward for the improvement of teaching practice in Kenya is given below. Theoretical orientation: Teaching practice should be conceptualized within the broad framework of teacher education. Its position status and role should be clearly spelt out and disseminated to those concerned with policy formulation and implementation of this important component of teacher education programme. A compromise teaching practice model needs to be designed which incorporates the good elements from the observation apprentice model, teacher aid programme model, teacher lesson demonstration model and micro teaching (peer teaching model). An adequately conceptualized teaching practice model should have its entire component geared towards the important role of producing a competent teacher. Policy guidelines: Teaching practice in Kenya is in dire need for clearly spelt out policy guidelines. These guidelines would be used by teacher educators such as, heads of schools and their teachers educational administrators at the national, provincial and district levels, the teacher service commission, the treasury, the university administrators, the lecturers, parents, sponsors and student. At the moment there are so many questions being raised by people which remain unanswered because of lack of dependable guidelines backed by legislation. Issues such as the duration, timing, structure, supervision financial management, quality and management of schools should be all addressed in the policy document. Such a document should be generated by a committee whose membership is representative of all the stakeholders of teaching practice. The document should be debated by the major organs of the institutions and the concerned ministries to gain approval; and acceptability.

Financial teaching practice: Teaching practice is an exercise that brings professional from different departments together such as those from administration supervision and

finance[8]. There is need for a standing committee on teaching practice at the national level and institutional level to co-ordinate these professionals and also to provide technical advice and ensure that quality is maintained. It is such a committee that should ensure that people managing teaching practice are academically and professionally qualified, have the competence and drive to make the exercise successful. The administrative machinery put in place should also be under scrutiny and review so that its effectiveness is always ascertained. Funding teaching practice: The standing committee should also deal with the important question of funding teaching practice to cover the administrative work, student needs and supervisors requirements. The issue of finance should not be left to chance since the success of the exercise activity should receive the bigger portion of its funds from government treasury? In case the grant falls short of the required amount then situation running teaching practice should turn to the beneficiary who is the student teacher to bridge the gap.

This is a proposal which implies cost – sharing that needs to be given serious thought[15]. In order to control escalation of the expenditure on teaching practice there is need for internal administrative improvements in terms of zoning, posting, supervising and external examination[2]. While administrative control of finances is important it is worthy noting that such controls can only lead to productivity if negotiated with all participants the exercise in order to bring them on board and make them appreciate the importance of such controls[4].

Quality assurance:

Teaching quality is often used to gauge the effectiveness of a teacher education programme[11]. The management of teaching practice should aim at nothing less than quality[19]. Quality can be assured in many ways. First, in order to produce quality teachers the training institutions have to provide adequate preparation of student teachers before they are posted to schools. Second, while doing teaching practice they need the support of the schools, universities, colleges and supervisors. Third, supervision is a key factor in quality assurance. The universities have to ensure that it is prompt, timely, well spaced, done by the right professionals, done properly and conducted as a team work, not as sporadic actions of unco-ordinated individuals. In order for supervision to succeed the supervisors have to be adequately financed, facilitated, co-ordinate and evaluated. Fourth, it is also important that student factors such as motivation, readiness, commitment and attendance during work hours are ensured. Unless students take their teaching seriously there can hardly be any quality assurance on teaching practice.

8. Teaching Practice Regulations

It is important that institutions drawn up and follow regulations that govern the implementation and assessment of teaching practice[10]. All institutions that train teachers

have well developed regulations on conducting teaching practice. However, on the ground very few stick to their rules. For instance several institutions have it that each student shall be assessed at least three times in each subject giving a minimum of six supervisions for the two teaching subjects. It would be interesting to find out the institutions that adhere to this rule. A research conducted at Egerton University on teaching practice shows that out of the 55 students surveyed none of them was supervised six, five or four times. Those who had the highest frequency of supervision had three supervisions each. The results show that 28 students were supervised three times, 16 were supervised twice and two students were supervised once[1]. The result shows that only a small number of those students received post supervision discussion of their lessons. This is only a situation at university that has been bold enough to conduct a study on teaching practice and publish the results. The situation in other universities though unclear is not expected to be any better. It seems clear that teaching practice regulations are not adhered to, a factor that undermines the quality of teaching practice[5]. Institutions conducting teacher education have to adhere to the rules and regulations governing the conduct of teaching practice in order to uplift the standards of teacher education. Rules governing frequency of supervision, spaced of supervisions, qualification of supervisors, funding management and so forth have been followed to the letter[4].

9. Conclusions

In conclusion it is necessary to point out that faculties of education have a responsibility bestowed upon them to ensure production of teachers whose performance are not questionable.

The production of such professionals requires collaboration between a number of institutions and individuals and it is the role of the faculties to provide sound machinery for co-coordinating them. It is important to remember that in the quest for quality teaching it is the faculties that are held responsible and accountable. This calls for intensification of the role played by departments in charge of teaching practice in the faculties of education to work tirelessly towards the production of mature, competent and motivated teachers.

Teaching is a complex activity. Its mastery requires systematic training. In Kenya, teacher education institutes have developed a teacher education component referred to as teaching practice which is used to provide pedagogical competence and professional experience to novice teachers. Through teaching practice student teachers are required to do actual teaching in the classroom, solve problems that arise during the lessons and assess learning outcomes. This paper is focused on effective teaching and teaching practice perspective with a view to providing insight into its concept, dimensions, models, objectives roles and suggest the way forward.

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