

Student -teachers Teaching Practice in field experience: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was what opportunities practice-teachers have achieved and also sought challenges that student-teachers faced in field experience at Injibara colleges of teachers' education. Mixed design was employed (both quantitative and qualitative) for this study. 3 partner schools in injibara city, 12 student teachers, 30 school teachers and 19 teacher educators were randomly selected. Questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data in items were filled by preschool teachers and teacher educators which were dealing student-teachers Performance on Knowledge of Teaching , Teacher-educators actual supervision on teaching practice Placement school teachers' challenges during teaching practice. Focused group discussion was used to triangulate the data collected using questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation and thematic analysis were used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The main findings revealed that student teachers have the opportunity to develop their teaching skills, build professional relationships and gain practical experience, But they faced challenges in designing specific objectives and delivering the lesson in the class and inadequate support from the part of supervisions during in field experience, on the other hand the study also showed that school teachers had positive perceptions toward teaching practice program and they accepted it as important to improve the student-teachers teaching skills and suggested some recommendation including the need for continuous development of teaching practice program, holding trainings students, successive supervision and giving immediate feedback and incentives for school teachers during training as well as coordinating with placement schools.

Key words: Challenges, opportunities, student- teachers, Teaching Practice,

Background of the study

Education provides an opportunity for student-teachers to do the following within the context of curriculum implementation: apply their wider school learning in real life situations in the community; make decisions about their learning rather than having decisions made for them; have opportunities to exercise individual and group initiative, inside and outside the traditional boundaries of schooling; and Exercise personal and shared responsibility, rather than being dependent on the teacher to solve problems and resolve issues develop and apply knowledge and skills that will underpin successful transitions to participate in economic and social life (MoE, 2006).

In this case, teacher education is important foundations of any educational system. It is through teacher education that the basis for good schools can be created because no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers (Endeley, 2014). Teaching Practice is a key component of a teacher training program. It is the central pivot of the professional training (Gujjar, Naoreen, Saifi&Bajwa, 2010).

Teaching Practice in Colleges of Education in Ethiopia is a well-structured program designed to provide an opportunity to develop and evaluate student teachers' competence in an actual classroom within school settings under the close follow-up (supervision) of experienced school teachers (mentors) and guidance of college teacher educators. This opportunity allows student-teachers to integrate the

theory and knowledge of course content with the application of principles and practices in a real work environment (Teferi, 2009). The term 'practice teaching' has three major connotations: the practicing of teaching skills and acquisition of the roles of a teacher; the whole range of experiences that students go through in schools; and the practical aspects of the course as distinct from theoretical studies (Endeley, 2014).

Teaching practice is an important component in teachers' education program in the TESO document (MoE, 2003) and given a significant place in the program. Some local studies tried to examine the practice and implementation of practicum program; and they proved student teachers' success and problems they faced. For instance, ShumetKef'yalew, et al (2006) has carried out research with a view of assessing the practice and its problems of practicum in some Colleges and Universities with primary and secondary placement schools. The study points out that the practicum program implementation has always been below what is expected of the student-teachers.

Since Teaching Practice is the most important fact is that it is a professional exercise which is focused on helping the student teacher to bridge the gap between theory and practice in education and develop competence as well. In the process of bridging the gap between educational theories and practice, the student teacher, through a program of cooperative and interactive guidance, acquires valuable skills in teaching and the management of teaching from experienced teachers thus improving their quality (Endeley, 2014)..

The concept of teaching practice is deeply rooted in the drive towards the education and training of quality or competent and professional teachers. It should be seen as the central part of teacher education courses and given priority on the timetable. Even though there are other factors that measure quality in education (Huber & Hutchings, 2005), teaching practice is also a vital factor for the training of competent teachers (Nancy, 2007). Currently, there is a debate that among teacher education stake holders on the quality of teaching practice throughout the world. Therefore he suggests that issues on teaching practice should be a universal concern by all the stakeholders of education. The current study therefore sought to determine the opportunities and challenges facing student teachers in teaching practice during field experiences at Injibara College of Teachers Education.

Statement of the problem

Teaching practice is important in teacher education as it generally aims at providing opportunities for student teachers to develop and evaluate their competences in the major areas of teaching (Harris & Sass, 2007). Similarly, Allen (2006) argued that teaching practice provides opportunities for the student-teachers to develop and evaluate their teaching competencies. Nevertheless, in their professional attachment, student-teachers are bound to face a number of challenges including lack of curriculum materials, inadequate supervision, and school teachers' neglect, and other socio-economic problems (Ankuma, 2007) that may interfere with their professional development and even negatively affect their attitudes towards the teaching profession. Subsequently this will reduce the quality of the graduate teachers who in essence ought to spearhead quality education in schools. Student-teacher practice has been implemented in many years in Injibara College of Teachers Education. In the meantime, the researcher has observed that some students felt reluctant to practice teaching in a real classroom situation. Although they studied courses like methods and strategies of teaching but some student teachers were incapable of putting theories into practice.

Crookes (2003) pointed out that much of what is happening in the classroom taught by student-teachers remains unknown. To the researcher's best knowledge; there has been none research into the challenges of teaching practice by student teachers Therefore, the researcher should focus more on the classrooms in which practical experience take place.. With this in mind, this study focus on the opportunities that student teachers achieved and challenges student teachers faced in teaching practice during field experience at Injibara College of Teachers Education.

Research questions

1. What opportunities practice-teachers have achieved during in field experience?
2. To what extents student-teachers able to apply the knowledge gained to teaching?
3. What are the potential challenges that student-teachers faced during their teaching practice?

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The main purpose of this study is what opportunities practice-teachers have achieved and also sought challenges that student-teachers faced in field experience at Injibara colleges of teachers' education.

Specific Objective

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out the opportunities achieved by student teachers in field experience.
2. Assess the extent to which student- teachers' ability applying the knowledge gained in their course work into real classroom practices.
3. Identify the challenges that student teachers faced in teaching practice at Injibara College of Teachers Education.

Delimitations of the study

This study delimited to Injibara college of Teachers Education, conceptually the study focused only on opportunities achieved by student teachers and challenges they faced in teaching practice during field experience. In relation to participants and time frame, the study focuses on third year student teachers in 2014 E.C.

Limitations of the study

It is important to note that the above list of opportunities and challenges faced by student teachers may not be comprehensive or applicable to all student teacher experiences. Additionally, the experiences of student teachers may vary depending on the school, grade level, subject area, and individual cooperating teacher. Therefore, this list should be viewed as a starting point for understanding some common opportunities and challenges faced by student teachers, rather than a definitive or exhaustive analysis.

Significance of the Study

The present study significantly benefits student-teachers to understand the nature of the problems facing their practice and re-strategize in order to overcome them. Teacher educators on their part as supervisors will implement a positive teaching practice experience through reconsidering and reviewing the student teachers' experiences. The college will have benefit from the study findings that will be a pointer to where the problems are coming from and take bold steps to solve them for a favorable outing for the students and also placement schools will be able to understand that they play essential roles in teaching practice for better teacher production for their schools in future.

Operational definition

- **Teaching practice-** refers to the entire actual school experience, classroom teaching practice,
- **Student-teacher-** refers to students who participated in teaching practice during field experience.
- **School teachers:-**placement school teachers who assigned as supervisor of student teachers.
- **Teacher educator:-**an instructor at Injibara college of teachers education and assigned as supervisor of student teachers.

Research design and methods

The design of this study was a descriptive survey According to Michael and Stephen, (2015) descriptive design tends to study the characteristics of a population using a representative sample

To conduct research on the opportunities and challenges student teachers facing in field experience, a mixed-methods approach were used. This would involve collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of student teachers.

Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires, which would ask teacher educators and placement school teachers to rate the level of students' preparedness and challenges facing in teaching practice.

Qualitative data could be collected through open ended questions and focus groups discussion with teacher educators, school teachers and student teachers who have completed field experience respectively. The focused group discussion explore in-depth experiences of student teachers, including the opportunities and challenges they faced in teaching practice

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the researcher employed peer review, seeking feedback from other researchers in the field to validate the findings.

Sources of Data

To conduct this study the researcher used primary data as a source of information from instructors, third year student-teachers and school-teachers, through questionnaire and focused group discussion. The decision to use these subjects as a source of primary data based on the expectation that they had a better experience and information about teaching practice.

Population, Sample size and Sampling Technique

The populations of the study were third year students of 2014E.C academic session, teacher educators and school-teachers from partner schools,

Simple random sampling technique was used in order to select those teacher educators, partner school teachers and third year student teachers who were experienced in teaching practice in field experience during the academic year 2014 E.C. included in the study. This had been done using lottery method. Thus, 19 teacher educators, 30 partner school teachers and 12 student-teachers within selected schools were used as a sample to provide the required data for the study.

Data collection instruments

Instruments to collect data Questionnaire and focused group discussion were used. All instruments were prepared on the basis of review of related literature and objectives of the research topic. Many scholars wrote about the importance of the questionnaire to collect information from respondents. Creswell (2012: 382) states that “questionnaire is a form used in survey design that participants in a study complete and return to the researchers.” It is a means of eliciting beliefs and practices of individuals on the issue under study. In this study, the questionnaire was the main instrument to collect data from teacher educators and school teachers. Focused group discussion was used which allows for further probing of respondents’ answers (Hayes, 1997). Focused group discussion was held with student teachers and it may provide the researchers with flexibility and to explore more deeply about the study

Questionnaire

The questionnaire aimed at acquiring more information from many samples, this instrument is more appropriate and economical and it also gives more freedom to the respondents. The questionnaire items prepared as both open-ended and closed-ended. The questionnaire was commented by college educators.

Due to this the researcher used a three-part survey questionnaire. The first part of the instrument solicited the respondents' personal information such as their age, sex, the field of specialization, the instrument's second segment was an accepted questionnaire called Questionnaire on Challenges during Teaching Practice. It detailed the perceived difficulties that student-teachers are likely to encounter. The teacher educators and school teachers were asked to answer challenges on the issues of a five point -Liker scales of Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree and were asked were asked to answer very high, high, average, poor and very poor about class room and lesson evaluations and three liker scales for school teachers responded in titled actual supervision delivered. An open-ended question in the third section of the instrument asked respondents to list their perceived opportunities obtained or envisioned during their practice teaching.

Focus group discussion

This was carried out with non-sampled students.. One was facilitating the discussion the other two helped him in writing main points of the discussion under an overall supervision and support from the researcher. The Amharic session of the focused group discussion was facilitated or moderated by the main researcher.

Procedure of Data Collection

To collect the data for the study, the following procedures were used.. **First**, the instruments were commented before college educator and school teachers using them in the actual work. The reason for comment is to check the clarity of items, and to tackle any problems related to distributing, collecting and administering instruments. Thus, unsuitable items were re-stated and changed. **Second**, teacher educators and school teachers were asked to help the researcher to distribute the questionnaire. Hence, the questionnaire was distributed to the study participants. All questionnaires distributed were filled, returned and tabulated for data interpretation. **Third**, after questionnaire was completed focus group discussion with student teachers were held to triangulate the data gathered through questionnaire.

Data Analysis

All the data collected in a manner that yield better result if quantified and those given in textual form were sorted, coded and organized properly including in tabular forms. The quantitative data were analyzed based largely on common descriptive statistical measures such mean and standard deviation.. The qualitative data were analyzed and interpreted properly after categorizing them into groups of contents having thematic relationships. Most of the results of interpretation of the qualitative data were mainly employed for the purpose of triangulation against that obtained from quantitative data analyses and interpretations.

Results and discussions

Opportunities Brought by Student Teachers

Research question 1:- What opportunities practice-teachers have achieved during in field experience?

Student teachers were asked to describe and explain about getting opportunities to practice teaching in field experience. Through analysis of the focused group discussion, the researcher tried to reflect how the participants used this conceptualize teaching practice from their perspectives. The respondents gave a range of overlapping ideas about the opportunities of teaching practice. The expressions of most participants are summarized in the following.

They explained that they have granted an opportunity to narrow the theory- practice gap. In one of such focused group discussion the researcher obtained the following quote as evidence:

... Even if we faced some challenges in teaching we developed confidence to act as a teacher.....

In the description above, it is evident that these participants underscore the development of competence and confidence as an important outcome of teaching experience. This finding affirms what the Jeffery (2008) states as student teaching experience increases teachers' confidence in their abilities and their desire to remain in the profession.

Research Question 2: To what extents student-teachers able to apply the knowledge gained to teaching?

Variables	Items/themes	Mean	St. d	Remark
I. Planning stage.	Stating			
	Objectives	2.47	1.04	Poor
	Core Points(b)	3.05	0.94	average
	Teaching and Learning Activities	3.21	0.83	average
	appropriate Teaching and Learning Materials	2.84	0.98	average
Grand mean		3.36	1.22	average
II. Delivery stage	➤ Introducing and Reviewing Previous Knowledge	3.46	0.94	v.high
	➤ Presenting of lesson in an orderly way	3.16	1.25	high
	➤ . Flowing of ideas	3.03	0.855	high
	➤ Applying assessment for learning	2.06	1.25	high
	➤ Questioning and Feedback	2.77	1.12	high
	➤ Motivating student to Participate	2.67	1.098	average
	➤ . Communicating with students	2.63	1.119	average
	➤ Applying different teaching methods(approaches)	2.16	0.961	Poor
	➤ Class room management	2.13	1.25	Poor
	➤ Supporting learners in their understanding level	2.06	1.24	Poor
	➤ Pace of lesson delivery	1.89	1.06	Poor
	➤ using teaching aids at the right time	1.83	1.28	poor
Grand mean		2.54	1.09	poor
III. Evaluation stage	Checking of the attainment of the stated objectives	2.95	1.22	average
	Giving Exercises and Assignments	3	1.2	average
Grand mean		2.97	1.21	average

Key:-1-1.8 very poor, 1.81-2.61 poor, 2.62-3.41 average, 3.42-4.21 high and 4.22-5.00 very high

Table 2 shows the average rating performance of student-teachers application of knowledge to real teaching exercise during teaching practice. Results are presented in the three components.

Planning stage

The last three items of this stage (2, 3 and 4),the teacher-educators respondents affirmed that student- teachers listing core points in the lesson preparation, and also had the potential of developing activities and selecting appropriate teaching and learning materials recorded above decision mean (mean scores 3.05, 3.21 and 2.54) respectively shows average.

In responding to item 1 recorded mean below a decision mean of 2.47 showed that the student teachers did not state objectives properly. Generally In this stage the recorded mean (M = 3.36) shows the student teachers' performance was in average state.

Stage of Lesson delivery

In table 2 Items from 1-7 recorded means scores (M = 4.32, 3.84, 3.79, 3.68, 3.58, 3.26, 3.16 and 2.63) respectively confirmed that the teacher educators responded high and very high While items from 8-12 recorded a lower mean of (mean scores 2.42, 2.37, 2.26, 2.16, 2.11) respectively, shows that the teacher educators responded that the performance of student teachers to apply different teaching methods (approaches) ,class room management ,supporting learners in their understanding level, pace

of lesson delivery were poor. But the overall (grand mean = 2.54) indicates that teacher-educators observed poor lesson delivery during teaching practice. From this one can say the main body of teaching practice faced challenges, so teacher-educators and school-teachers do their best for the effectiveness of class room teachings.

Evaluation stage

Table 2 -items 1 and 2 recorded means (M= 2.95 and 3.00) indicates teacher-educators respondents rated about the ability of student-teachers checking of the attainment of the stated objectives and giving exercises and assignments were average. From this we can conclude that student teachers evaluation technique should be improved.

Table 1.Teacher-educators actual supervision on teaching practice,

NO	Item	Mean	Std. D	agreement
1	Meet with school teachers to discuss the nature of the field experience and specific information regarding the candidate's involvement in the classroom.	1.6	0.82	insufficient
2	Assisting schoolteachers by giving the latest theories and sharing experience.	1.5	0.74	insufficient
3	Taking sufficient time for observing the student-teachers teaching competencies and behavior during class room observation	2.2	0.79	Poor
4	Joint planning and reaching agreement with student- teachers on objectives and methods in class room observation	2.6	0.63	sufficient
5	Making agreement with student –teachers on contents and time for the reflection after each class room experience	2.6	0.61	sufficient
Grand mean		1.642	0.788	Poor

In table 3 teacher educators' respondents asked to rate as how of their role of training school teachers and performance assessments were performed. Accordingly, ' in item 1 and item 2, mean scores (M =1.6 and M=1.53). Teacher educators responded they were not sufficiently organized meeting with school teachers' current theories and applying strategies of implementing teaching practice aimed at sharing experience to school teachers. Regarding item 3 recorded mean (M=2.27) shows teacher-educators took Poor time for supervision was sufficient or not. This shows it needs improvement.

In item 4 and items 5, the recorded mean (M=2.6and M=2.67) shows sample respondents responded there were sufficiently jointly prepared plan with student teachers for objectives, methods about reflecting on their teaching applying on contents and time for the reflection after each class room experience was sufficient., in contrary, some of the student teachers during focused group discussion, they said that there was no any discussion after supervision so we did not get time to reflect about our teaching respectively. The grand mean indicates teacher-educators actually did not do what the teaching

practice need from them; therefore teacher educator should do their best as possible for the effectiveness of the program.

Table 4: Placement school teachers' challenges during teaching practice

N O	Items	Mean	St. D	REMARK
1.	Lack of material and monetary reward for mentors	3.6	1.38	s. agree
2.	School teachers less commitment.	3.4	1.27	S. agree
3.	Lack of understanding about principles, policies and supporting methods	3.1	1.17	average
4.	Lack of support from college instructors..	2.8	1.44	average
5.	Unable to support student teachers effectively due to work load.	3.2	1.25	average
6	Student-teachers showed low interest to take Feedback	2.7	1.25	undecided
7	Student teachers had less initiation for holding discuss his/her lesson after every class.	1.8	1.26	disagree
8	The student-teachers were unable to present their lesson before teaching.	1.7	1.28	disagree
9	School teachers often attended in class when student teachers were teaching.	1.7	1.28	disagree
10	Lesson evaluation and assessment format were filled unethically.	1.6	1.18	disagree
Grand mean		2.60	1.280	disagree

Table 4 is concerned with identifying the potential factors that possibly restrain the implementation of the school based practicum course learning. Here, the school teachers were asked to rate their level of agreement with the given possible factors. With regard to the first item and second item,, the recorded mean (M=3.6 \$ M=3.4) shows there were Lack of material and monetary reward for School teachers and led them to show less commitment respectively. Regarding items 3 4 and 5, recorded mean (M= 3.1 M=2.8 M = 3.2) respectively shows average on the three items. The sixth item, the recorded mean (M=2.7) indicates they were unable to decide whether the level of student teachers interest to take feedback. The other items from item 8 to 10, recorded means (M=1.8, 1.7, 1.7, 1.67) shows school teachers were disagreed about the statements. In general the grand mean (M=2.6) shows school teachers got challenges to provide and support student teachers during teaching practice.

Challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice

Research question 3: What are the potential challenges that student-teachers faced during their teaching practice?

Inadequate Support related to teacher educators.

Student teachers are expected to receive constructive feedback from their supervisors to enable them to make corrections and the appropriate adjustments of their professional abilities (Mosas, 2019). Support for student teachers was an essential component of the teaching practice. However, responses from the respondent indicated that their respective supervisors fail to do so as evidenced in the following quotes:

...majority us in the first round we were disappointed about our supervisors during teaching practice. Every student teacher need constructive feedbacks However, supervisors would only have a quick look at the lesson plan and not paying any visits...

And one respondent said that *...especially in the second round of supervision my supervisor took less time to stay in a class and also we did not hold post lesson meetings...*

This is in line with what has been found by Nakpodia, (2011) that some supervisors do not even have time to sit down and discuss their observations and comments with the student teachers. A substantive explanation by informant in the above quotes indicated that the support they provided is not as they hoped and inadequate to brought them the experience they expect from the practicum. These forms of support are crucial to teacher trainees as they enhance professional and academic growth and development on the part of the trainees

The finding seems to confirm what Clary (1991) argued as increased supervision helps in determining if field experience generate the desired results and what Goodman (1985) believes the quality of field experience improves when supervisors are more involved. In the same vein Jeffery (2008) stated that more frequent feedback from university supervisors is related to greater student teacher confidence and desire to remain in the teaching profession which contradicts with what the respondents reported as they often receive conflicting and insufficient feedback from university based supervisors.

Inadequate Support related to school teachers

In focused group discussion few student teacher also expressed their dissatisfaction about the support provided by the school teacher. They explained that they gave full responsibility for the student teacher and left the school. Owing to this they face a problem when they need help from the subject teacher as they are practitioner. The following quote is a reflective of this view:

...we are practitioners not experts. However, there is no meaningful support given to us from the subject teacher instead they told us the grade level and section we are expected to teach and left the school by giving all the responsibilities. They see the program is a period of a break...

Besides this student teachers sadly said that *“we often go through hard times trying to make a balance between daily lesson plan and annual plan”. Because of this our school teachers enforced us to teach too much topics in a period, rather helping to do better...*

The description above clearly indicated that the student teachers did not get proper support from the school teachers. These illustrative responses substantiate previous research done by Ligadu (2009) which stated that during practicum there is no systematic mentoring system at school.

The nature of supporting student teachers in teaching practice is an important factor in new teacher development. The guidance, mentoring and feedback that student teachers receive from their school and college supervisors play a critical role in their learning and development. However, schoolteachers (mentors) were failed to optimally support student teachers since they were overloaded.

Challenges related to student teachers

Preparation stage

Preparing a well-organized lesson plan contains all the required elements and in alignment. This could be because student teachers did not receive enough training and inadequate feedback Green *et al.*(1998). To dig into challenges encountered by the practice teachers, they were discussed about what particular aspect of lesson planning they had difficulty with, Most of them said “*We had difficulty designing objectives and selecting appropriate teaching methods.*”It is supported by teacher educator who claimed that "It is difficult to think of teaching and learning activities without appropriately prepared lessons.”

Lesson delivery

Kamila (2021) reveals the strength teaching practicum including students dealing, classroom management, applying theories into practice, bonding a relation and support with their peer, critical thinking skills, etc. However responses from respondents indicated that they failed to manage the class room and is affected their teaching and learning process. As evidence most of them quote as follows

...we learnt how to organize and manage the classroom environment to maximize learning and manage classroom interactions and student conduct to create a positive climate for learning. But practically we faced some difficulties in managing and controlling problems which affected our class activities...

This is consistent with what was stated in a study carried out by Mosas (2019) which showed that classroom management is one of the ‘major challenges identified by student teachers during their teaching practice’ and another finding. Teachers cannot be effective if they do not have appropriate management. Although these skills are difficult to teach, there are ways to demonstrate and model effective management skills for pre-service teachers (Watson, Ackerman, Goodwin, & Parker, 2007).

Diversity:- As to managing students' diversity, the respondents said “we did not have the chance to actually and personally meet and know our students. Hence, we could not design a lesson that best suits our students. When asked about how this affected their teaching experiences, they responded by saying that we only design lessons with generic strategies appropriate to all. Most of them stated

....Teaching has become a challenge. We do not know whether our strategy and activities suit our learners. We could not cater to our students' different learning styles and multiple intelligences...

Time management

The success of a lesson depends on good planning and effective execution of this plan. Planning supports the determination of the time to allot to a particular topic and effective use of this time (Koç, 2009). However student teachers responded they fail to cover the lesson properly. When asked about how this affected their activity effectively, all of them responded by quoting the following

...We were required to cover a single period in 40 minutes; however we could not properly use the allocated time for each activity as stated in the lesson plan. Due to this some activities were overlapped and some were missed...

Özkölç, Bilgin, and Kartal (2008) found in their study that student teachers do not view themselves to be effective regarding time management. This result supports the findings in the current study.

Instructional materials

When teaching materials were effectively used, they offer a reality of experience which stimulates individual activity and motivates pupils to investigate or explore, thereby increasing voluntary reading in pupils (Olaitan, Agusiobo, 1981) and reduces the number of verbal responses, hence student teachers said we could not use them in a proper and effective way. Some of them quoted that

...learning and teaching can be improved by effective selection and use of instructional materials because they appeal to human senses. But we do not know how and when do we use them...

Pedagogical and content knowledge

The third prevalent problem among student teachers was the lack of pedagogical and content knowledge. For example some student teachers statement below illustrates this;

"Sometimes I know the subject but I do not know how to teach it so I just try to cover the topic."

Applying different teaching methods (approaches)

"We took methodology courses in different semester we lack knowledge and skills on teaching methods, we cannot be implemented well."

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The objective of this study was to find out opportunities getting students and aimed to shed light on the challenges that were faced in teaching practice during field experience. To achieve the purpose, the researcher formulated the following research questions:

1. What opportunities practice-teachers have achieved during in field experience?
2. To what extents student-teachers able to apply the knowledge gained to teaching?
3. What are the potential challenges that student-teachers faced during their teaching practice

To find out the answer of the research questions, a sample of 19 teacher educators, 30 placement school teachers (from 3 primary school teachers), and 12 student-teachers were selected.

The questionnaires comprising both open and close-ended items were prepared and distributed to collect relevant information from the target population. The aims of the questionnaires were to elicit information pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of school teachers and teacher educators in practicing teaching programs. The major challenges encountered in the effective implementation of placement school based practice were illustrated.

Additionally, focus group discussion was included to get relevant and complete information for the current opportunities and challenges faced student teacher in teaching practice.

On the bases of these, the findings of the study were that:

1. the majority of the study participants has poor understanding and perceptions for their roles and responsibilities of the educational policies about the practicum program;
2. There is poor relationship between the college and the schools to implement the program for many reasons. Lack of organized training,

3. There were poor supports, assistance, follow up, assessment and feedback to the student teachers by school teachers and teacher educators;
4. There have been planning and organization problems of the of school teachers, teacher educators and student teachers,

The sources of the challenges mentioned by majority of participants were:

Shortage of training for the key participants of the program; lack of commitment and collaboration work with of school teachers and teacher educators, lack of pedagogical knowledge and lack of supervision and feedback

Conclusions

Nowadays actual school experience is an essential element of the teacher education program (MOE: 2003). As a result, it is implemented in almost all Teacher Education colleges of the country. The researcher has conducted a study that is entitled as "Opportunities and Challenges facing student teachers in teaching practice in Injibara College of Teachers Education ". From this research work, the researcher has got various issues from its participants

Based on these, the researcher has made the following main points:

Student-teachers need further training and getting support how to deliver a lesson i.e. preparing lesson plan, classroom management, and make better use of the time they have and establish good relation with pupils, other teachers and the school administration. Student-teachers had very good theoretical knowledge on the teaching methods, content and how to write lesson plans but when it comes to putting this theoretical background into practice, they face challenges and difficulties.

There were three types of challenges.

Firstly, challenges related to the schools where student teachers conducted their teaching practice. For example, school teachers did not provide the student teachers with adequate support. The participants complained about the lack of support hindered them to practice effectively.

Secondly, there were challenges related to teacher educators. The results showed that student teachers did not receive constructive feedback on time; some supervisors did not devote enough time to discussing the student teachers' weaknesses and strengths after the teaching session.

Thirdly, as for the challenges related to the student teachers themselves, some of them lacked the necessary confidence to carry out the teaching practice and others showed very little classroom management skills. Based on these findings, those responsible for the teaching practice program at the college should study these challenges and conduct a comprehensive review of the program with an emphasis on the role.

Besides these, If teaching practice is well facilitated and better implemented, it will have many advantages for the student-teachers, teacher educators and school teachers in particular, and college and schools in general. It is also a means to create a strong college school link and exchange of professionals and resources among each other and need a continuous support, guidance, follow up, continuous assessment and feedback .but the teaching practice activities program has many unsolved challenges.

Among these there were a lack of strong link between the college and schools and lack of awareness among school teachers, teacher educators, student-teachers and other concerned bodies and also, teacher educators and school teachers did not assess and gave feedback continuously and regularly. They only focus on final (summative) assessment and grading of student-teachers' performance out of supporting learning process were major challenges which faced student teachers during teaching practice

Recommendations

Based on the major findings and conclusions drawn the following recommendations were forwarded,

The teacher education system should give enough time which is flexible to implement school based practice.

Teacher educators should give time and need to have related level of qualification to school teachers, to teach student-teachers when they are in colleges, to supervise them and to provide feedback, school teachers need time to plan the student-teachers learning, observe them, provide feedback, assess them, and keep records, and report results or information to teacher educators Furthermore, school teachers and teacher educators and' also need to learn to work together on these tasks and needs time to do this effectively.

Student-teachers also need more time to be supervised. This is the request of teacher educators who are looking for subject content knowledge and teaching skill competencies. The student-teachers would practice teaching better if they could have consecutive supports and feedbacks.

A strong college-schools link and positive and continuous school teachers -teacher educators relationship should be created for the success of the student-teachers practicum performance and for the improvement of the program.

Generally, efforts should be made by the college and schools to attract academically able and professionally motivated student-teachers towards the teaching stream; the efficiency of the education program should be evaluated and should be frequently revised through the active participation of college instructors. Great attention should also be given to satisfy the social and psychological needs of student-teachers during and after teaching practice program so that the intended educational objectives can be achieved.

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