

# An Investigation On Student-Teachers' Acquisition Of New Knowledge During Teaching Practice Exercise. A Case Study Of University Of Embu.

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## Abstract

Teaching practice gives student -teachers an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge into practical knowledge. The student- teacher is able to interact with school administration, teachers and learners as well as non- teaching staff. The study investigated student –teachers' acquisition of new knowledge during teaching practice exercise. A descriptive survey design was employed. The respondents were one hundred and sixty and they were randomly selected from four hundred and ninety-five student-teachers. The instruments for data collection were student's questionnaire, interview schedule and researcher's observation schedules. The data was analysed through descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that some student-teachers acquired new knowledge on professional ethics in teaching career while other student-teachers acquired new knowledge of interacting with school administration, teachers and learners as well as non-teaching staff. In addition, the study reported that the student- teachers acquired knowledge on how to cope with different personalities while other student- teachers acquired soft skills. Further, the study indicated that some student- teachers acquired knowledge on innovations and improvisation of teaching learning resources while other student-teachers sharpened their knowledge in co-curriculum activities. Therefore, the study recommended that all student-teachers should actively be involved in teaching practice exercise. Further, the study recommended that proper induction for student -teachers proceeding for teaching practice exercise is paramount. Moreover, the schools providing attachment to student -teachers need to provide conducive environment. The findings from this study will help universities and colleges when preparing student -teachers for teaching practice.

**Key words:** Student- teachers, Knowledge, Teaching practice, Acquisition, Learners.

## 1.1 Background

Teaching practice is mandatory for all student -teachers pursuing education profession in Kenya. The student- teachers are exposed to real teaching –learning environment. Mostly the exercise is conducted in a classroom set up, though the teacher can still conduct it outside classroom such as field trips and visiting the surrounding environment. This helps the student -teachers to embrace different teaching methodology (Oluloagemi, 2010). Therefore, adequate induction needs to be done before the teaching practice commences. According to Darling- Hammond et

al, (2017), student-teachers who were exposed to classroom management, emerging technology and use of relevant teaching-learning resources as well as learner centred methodology usually became effective teachers. Ronfeldt et al (2015) argued that classroom management is key for effective teaching and achieving expected outcomes. In addition, Solheim et al (2018) reported that classroom management is a vital pedagogical skill since it helps a teacher to effectively deliver content. Further, Solheim (2017) observed that the teacher develops proficiency skills and mastery of new knowledge. Therefore, according to Muraina (2017) student-teachers need to observe experienced teachers in classroom teaching. This might help them to correct mistakes as well as strengthening their strong skills. It is also equally important for assessors to give student- teachers constructive criticism as well as positive reinforcement. According to Kiggundu & Naymulill, (2009) most student- teachers were usually motivated in the teaching profession due to acquisition of different skills. Further, during teaching practice student-teachers participate in school activities such as attending staff meetings, participating in co-curriculum activities, marking learners' assignment and examinations as well as classroom management and being on duty. In addition, Quick & Sieborger (2005) observed that teaching practice exposes student-teachers to real teaching world and contextualise their theoretical knowledge to practical knowledge. It is against this background that prompted the researcher to carry out an investigation on student-teachers' acquisition of new knowledge during teaching practice exercise.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Teaching practice is mandatory for all student -teachers pursuing Bachelor of Education in Kenya as their profession. Teaching practice gives student- teachers an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge into practical knowledge. The student- teacher is able to interact with school administration, teachers and learners as well as professional documents from Teacher service commission (TSC). Health interaction results to acquisition of new knowledge which might help in gaining a positive attitude towards teaching career. Therefore, student- teachers need to prepare adequately for teaching practice exercise. This will help them to gain necessary skills which will prepare them to be effective teachers. Due to Kenyan examination system which is examination oriented, the learners usually focus on high grades during assessment. Therefore, forgetting that they are supposed to gain skills which will help them to be effective teachers. This has prompted the researcher to investigate student –teachers' new knowledge acquisition during teaching practice exercise.

This helps the teacher to gain skills in preparing professional documents and interpersonal relationship with learners and other members in the school.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

To investigate the knowledge acquired by student- teachers during teaching practice exercise

To establish the extent of knowledge acquired by student- teachers during teaching practice exercise

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The study findings will be useful to student -teachers, teachers, school and university administration and assessors. Therefore, the study will reveal new skills acquired by student-teachers during teaching practice exercise. The knowledge gained will help student-teachers to make teaching practice as practical as possible by being involved with various activities in school.

### **2.1 Methodology of the Study**

The study adopted descriptive survey research design to investigate the knowledge acquired by student- teachers during teaching practice exercise. The respondents were student-teachers from University of Embu who carried out their teaching practice in May- August 2018 and principals of teaching practice schools. The sample consisted of one hundred and sixty student-teachers who were randomly selected from four hundred and ninety five student- teachers. Data collection was done through student's questionnaire, interview schedule and researcher's observation schedules. The data was thematically analysed.

### **3.0 Discussion and findings of the study**

#### **3.1: To Investigate the Knowledge Acquired by Student- Teachers during Teaching Practice Exercise.**

The study sought to investigate the knowledge acquired by student- teachers during teaching practice exercise. The study revealed that 47.1% of the student- teachers reported that they gained new knowledge in professional ethics while 22.4% of the student- teachers indicated that they gained new knowledge in interacting with learners. In addition, the study revealed that 20 % of the student- teachers observed that they gained new knowledge in interacting with teachers and Non-teaching staff while 7.1 % of the student- teachers observed that they gained new skills through team work. Further, the study indicated that 3.5 % of the student- teachers observed that they gained new knowledge in preparing teaching resources. It is interesting to note that most student -teachers gained new knowledge in social life. Therefore, during induction the student can be inducted on how to interact and work with people.

#### **3.2 To Establish the Extent of Knowledge Acquired by Student- Teachers during Teaching Practice Exercise**

The study sought to establish the extent to which of knowledge is acquired by student-teachers on professional ethics, interacting with learners, teachers and non-teaching staff besides preparing teaching resources during teaching practice exercise.

##### **3.2.1 To Investigate New Knowledge gained in Professional Ethics**

The study revealed that out of 47.1% of the student- teachers that indicated that they gained new knowledge in professional ethics, 51.6% of the student- teachers gained the new knowledge in time management, commitment, organisation of professional documents as well as increasing their confidence. On the other hand, 25.8% of the student- teachers gained the new knowledge in delivering content by integrating different pedagogical skills. In addition, 22.6% of the student- teachers gained the new knowledge in having a positive attitude towards teaching

profession. Through teachers code of ethics, the student teacher gained new knowledge in maintaining professional distance with learners and also through to professional dress code. Moreover, the student-teachers learnt new methods of behaviour modifications while dealing with indiscipline learners. Over and above, the student- teachers were able to understand the importance of TSC code of ethics. It is noteworthy to note that, majority of student- teachers were able to gain positive attitude towards teaching career.

### **3.2.2 To Investigate New Knowledge gained in Interacting with Learners**

The study revealed that out of 22.4% of the student- teachers that indicated that they gained new knowledge in interacting with learners 52.2% of the student- teachers reported that they were able to interact and associate with learners with individual differences. This helped them to prepare remedial lessons for weak learners and giving more work to bright learners. They also reported that they were able to vary teaching methodology depending on the ability of learners. The study indicated that student-teachers gained skills on how to make the lesson learner-centred by involving learners through discussions, role play and group work as well as class experiment. Moreover, 47.8% of the student- teachers reported that they gained skills on decision making while handling indiscipline learners as well as guidance and counselling sessions. The study observed that student-teachers gained skills on handling big classes as well as small classes. This helped them to build health relationship with learners and to prepare in order to handle different classes. The findings supported Solheim et al (2018) who reported that classroom management is a vital pedagogical skill since it helps a teacher to effectively deliver content. It is clear from this study that majority of student - teachers understood that though learners are in the same class they are usually very different.

### **3.2.3 To Investigate New Knowledge gained in Interacting with Teachers and Non-Teaching Staff**

The study observed that out of 20% of the student- teachers that indicated that they gained new knowledge in interacting with teachers and Non-teaching staff, majority indicated that they gained soft skills such as patience, cooperation and team work as well as integrity, commitment and decision making. It is interesting to note that student- teachers learnt that it is important to apply team work at all times since it usually gives the best outcome. In addition, the student-teachers learnt that soft skills are very important in life. The findings supported Muraina (2017) who observed student-teachers need to observe experienced teachers in classroom teaching. This might help them to correct mistakes as well as strengthening their strong skills.

### **3.2.4 To Investigate New Knowledge gained in Team Work.**

The study indicated that out of 7.1 % of the student- teachers who gained new skills in team work 50% of the student- teachers expressed that team work is key in performance of any school. On the other hand, 20 % of student- teachers indicated that team work require cooperation from administration, learners and non-teaching staff. In addition, 18% of student- teachers argued that they will start applying team work in their daily today life while 12% of student- teachers established that team work gives the best results. The findings supported Kiggundu &Naymulill, (2009) who indicated that most student- teachers were usually motivated in the teaching profession due to acquisition of different skills. Further, during teaching practice student-teachers participate in school activities such as attending staff meetings, participating in co-curriculum activities, marking learners' assignment and examinations as well as classroom

management and being on duty. It is important therefore to note that team work is a pedagogical skill in producing the best results.

### **3.2.5 To Investigate New Knowledge gained in Preparing Teaching Resources**

The study reported that out of 3.5 % of the student- teachers who gained new knowledge in preparing teaching resources, 60% of the student- teachers reported that relevant teaching-learning resources helped the learners to understand the concept being taught and also enhance active participation by learners. In addition, 40 % of the student- teachers observed that relevant teaching-learning resources brought reality of the concept being taught as well as assisting them to demonstrate ideas effectively. This findings supported Darling- Hammond et al, (2017) who reported that student-teachers who were exposed to classroom management, emerging technology and use of relevant teaching-learning resources as well as learner centred methodology usually became effective teachers. It is important to note that the student- teachers learnt that learners can contribute in making and gathering teaching-learning resources. The student- teachers reported that surrounding environment is easily available teaching-learning resource

### **4.1 Conclusion of the Study**

Teaching practice helps the student-teachers to acquire skills which are beneficial in teaching career. During the exercise the student-teachers were able to practice theories and principles of education. The student-teachers gained knowledge on: TSC professional ethics, interaction with learners and teachers, importance of teaching learning resources and skills to handle different personalities. It is evident from the study that student-teachers gained soft skills which are very important in teaching career. It is noteworthy to note that most students discovered that secondary schools syllabus has changed and also discipline of student has deteriorated as compared to when they were in school. From the findings of this study, teaching practice need to provide experiential learning which will help student-teachers to acquire different skills which are useful for effective teaching.

### **5.1 Recommendations of the Study**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Effective induction for student- teachers proceeding for teaching practice exercises would help them to prepare for the exercise.

The teaching practice schools to provide conducive environment for student-teachers during teaching practice period.

Student-teachers should be actively involved in schools activities

The student-teachers need to be assessed and given feedback by the assessors on how to improve on the weak areas

The universities should ensure that assessors are qualified and knowledgeable on issues of teaching practice.

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