

## Teaching Practice as Internship

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### *10.1 Abstract*

Learning to teach is a multi-dimensional process that extends beyond the three main components of pre-service teacher preparation that include: imparting subject content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and the practical aspect that introduces school-based experiences. While these three components are important aspects of preparation as offered by universities and teacher training colleges, the practical component herein referred to as the Practicum or teaching practice holds a very special place basically because it provides an opportunity for theory to be turned into practice. For the student-teacher, practicum is an opportunity to understand the dynamics of classroom teaching, while for the faculty, it is an opportunity to observe how their students apply knowledge acquired in the lecture halls. On the other hand, research and literature in the field of teacher education agree that if practicum is not well designed, it can lead to limited experiences for the student-teacher that may not prepare them well for the profession while also leading to high attrition in the profession. This chapter examines the aspect of teaching practice from literature and studies and then engages in an analysis of models of teaching practice used in Kenyan institutions of higher learning. The chapter then proposes a re-conceptualization of practicum to internship that will involve an extended period placed in the final year of the teacher training program; mentoring of student-teachers by practicing teachers and, the establishment of partnerships among schools and institutions that train teachers leading to an internship-like program.

**Key Words: Teaching practice, Student-teacher, Internship, Practicum, Teacher training, Clinical supervision, prospective teacher.**

### *10.2 Introduction*

Education is increasingly being regarded as the means by which a Nation can adapt to social, economic and cultural change and thus the sustained focus on the facilitators of the educational experiences: the teachers. There is consensus among scholars and educational stakeholders on the central role played by an effective teacher in determining what students learn and how they learn it, thus the need to invest in the training of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Johnson, 2006). Indeed, many studies and literature on teacher education have established that if an education system has to serve the needs of society, then the kind of training given to the teachers must be in tandem with the accelerating changes in the world and the variety of learners in today's classrooms and schools. Institutions that provide initial teacher preparation and the curriculum they adopt in the preparation have become the focus of policy makers and educational stakeholders, the world over. There is a growing understanding that a well-trained teaching force is an important factor in improving education quality by implementing the many reforms that characterize education

systems worldwide (OECD, 2001). The expectations of teachers by governments and society are high! It is hoped that they must provide tomorrow's world with citizens who will spur their Nations into achieving great heights in social, economic, technological and political spheres. As they do so, teachers are expected to exhibit certain characteristics that go beyond intellectual and academic qualifications. According to Coolahan (2002), the key characteristics for today and tomorrow's teachers include among others: a deep understanding of oneself and the nature of one's work; possession of a wide range of professional skills in teaching, planning, assessment and personal relationships and, the ability to cooperate as a team player. It is a truism that such characteristics can best be nurtured and established in a school environment and thus the contention of this paper that teaching practice/practicum should allow these experiences to be established before the prospective teacher fully enters the profession. Additionally, the above characteristics and others are important in the shift from a student teacher to a prospective teacher who is ready to take up their position in the teaching profession. This paper will briefly discuss the rationale for teaching practice in initial teacher preparation.

### ***10.3 Rationale for Teaching Practice***

Teaching practice is a long established component of teacher training and this is with good reasons. Firstly, it provides an avenue where there is praxis between theory and practice in teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2008). Course units offered in the schools of education in institutions of higher learning consist mainly of theories, models and principles that underlie pedagogy. These theories, models and principles need to be applied to real world situations that are present in the classroom and school environment. In a sense these ideas define the profession and one is not fully a teacher unless they have learnt and can apply the principles of pedagogy. All countries the world over are experiencing massive school enrolment coupled with limited resources to support and enhance education and a competent teacher is one of the key factors that will ensure the realization of education goals. A well prepared teacher who has an idea of the system they will work in is a resource for the government to invest in. Such a teacher is one who can apply theory in practice to facilitate learning for a variety of learners in the classroom and especially in the school of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Secondly, teaching practice is expected to provide opportunities for the prospective teacher to see what good teachers do, to interact with these model teachers and get insights into how they understand and appreciate their work (Coolahan, 2002). Best practice by teachers in terms of content delivery, in the form of appropriate interaction with learners and the administration and even conduct in various positions of leadership are aspects that can only be found in real school and classroom situations. If the prospective teacher has to avoid falling back to what they gained as students in what is termed 'apprenticeship of observation' that may include bad habits and narrow views of the profession, then they must observe good practice. It is a truism that all human beings fall back to what they have seen when they are faced with situations that demand action and if they have observed best practice that is admirable, they will apply it. Most of those who take

the Bachelor of Education degree may have found themselves here for various reasons, but to assist them make up their mind to stay in the profession, they need to see best practice and good teachers.

Thirdly, teaching practice should provide opportunity for the student-teacher to understand the profession by engaging with learners, fellow teachers and the wider school community that includes the administration, non-teaching staff and parents (Darling-Hammond, 2000). A majority of student-teachers only have experience as students in a school and thus the need for them to take up the new role of a teacher interacting with the members of the school community. This is an experience that cannot be found in a lecture hall or textbooks on education, yet it forms the daily experiences of a teacher who has understood other stakeholders in the school, as well as identified their position in the school system. Engaging with members of the school community will bring the prospective teacher face to face with issues that demand further examination to understand them. It is a possibility that when one inquires about their profession, they are likely to be concerned about it and also likely to remain in it despite the challenges that are present or emerging. Well-structured teaching practice should allow for the student-teacher to gain the skill of inquiry since the school experience will bring with it many issues that need solutions and way forward. A teacher who inquires is a lifelong learner who will seek to understand the challenging situations, alone or in a team with other members of the school community. It is an established reality that teaching can be a lonely job and thus situations that lead to collaborative ventures are a welcome means of developing relationships of care and trust.

Fourthly, it is expected that teaching practice will provide an opportunity for the student-teacher to develop skills that are key to the profession like: fluent speaking, ability to effectively share information, meaningful reading, working in teams and using resources to achieve teaching and learning objectives (Gujjar, 2009). For the student-teacher, it is not enough to have intellectual knowledge of pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of pedagogy, given that teaching is a more complex task than intellectual knowledge. Teacher training presumes that knowing content knowledge does not presuppose that one will be able to pass it on to another person and more so, a young person, thus the need for one to develop appropriate skills for teaching. Teaching practice is a moment to test one's ability to facilitate learning and to do so professionally in ways that will make learning meaningful for the learner and improve the learning outcomes. It is in the school experience that the prospective teacher can also identify desirable interests and develop attitudes and ideas related to teaching (Ibid). This could include participation and involvement in co-curricular activities, taking up leadership roles and participating in school improvement ventures like benchmarking, setting and marking joint examinations.

Fifthly, teaching practice is an opportunity to evaluate the student as a potential teacher. As a component of the Bachelor of Education degree, teaching practice provides an insight into the ability of the student-teacher to successfully teach and do all that is associated with the training. For the faculty, teaching practice is a component that contributes towards certification of the

prospective teacher and thus supervision and assessment are key when observing the teacher in class. Poor or mediocre performance in this component could mean that one needs more preparation to take up the role of teaching while positive feedback about one's ability in this area could imply that one is ready to teach. The experiences that student-teachers go through during teaching practice could also determine their resolve to either remain in the profession or shift to other careers and try their hand in them. Given the above reasons for the teaching practice component in teacher training, it will be important to understand how this component is structured in teacher training institutions in Kenya.

#### ***10.4 Models of Teaching Practice in Kenya***

The Kenyan educational system provides two levels for the training of teachers, that is, universities who train teachers for secondary and tertiary institutions and the teacher colleges that train teachers at diploma level for secondary school and certificate for primary and early childhood centres. An examination of these institutions of teacher training reveals two broad models that have served the education system well, this far. The first is that practiced by pioneer schools of education like Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi where the practicum is positioned in either the third or fourth and therefore last year of the Bachelor of Education degree. This model is in use in other schools of education with slight variations in regard to the duration of the practicum session. The model allows for student-teachers to be placed in institutions of their preference where they expect to be assessed at least three times during the entire period. The assessment is on content delivery and classroom conduct by the teacher. The placement schools are usually encouraged to provide mentorship for the student-teachers by allocating a cooperating teacher to the student. The cooperating teacher may or may not take up their role especially after off-loading their lessons on the student teacher, a factor that leaves the faculty as the only ones to provide feedback on the student-teacher's performance. The fact that the session is viewed as assessment leads to anxiety in the student teacher especially when the frequency of visitation is far apart leading to less rapport, more fear of failure and less assurance about performance.

The second model is that used by Diploma teacher colleges who expect their students to undertake the teaching practice after their final examination in the third year, where they stay in a school for two terms. The students are also placed in schools of their choice and assessed at least three times. The first term is supervised by the college tutors while it is hoped that the school will work with the teacher in the second term in what could be termed as unpaid internship. Apart from the extended length of the session, the student-teachers from diploma colleges are also expected to participate in other areas of the school like in co-curricular activities where their performance is assessed. During the second term of the teaching practice, the placement school is expected to assist the student-teacher by providing mentorship however, since this is not followed up and therefore very few schools provide the necessary assistance. For P1 teachers and those pursuing a certificate in Early Childhood Education, the teaching practice is for one term with three assessments. In a situation similar to that of student teacher undertaking the degree, students

undertaking a diploma or certificate in education also suffer from fear and anxiety over supervision and make very deliberate efforts to impress on the day of assessment.

From the above discussion of how teaching practice is structured in Kenyan teacher training institutions, one may conclude that there is need for new dimensions to be introduced into the teaching practice component. Literature and studies on teacher preparation seem to concur on the view that teaching practice as described above is deficient in preparing the teacher for today and tomorrow's schools. Among the reasons provided include: firstly, the issue of the time allocated for teaching practice as being brief and sometimes poorly positioned and thus the need for an extended period that will result in supervision that provides formative rather than summative feedback (Coolahan, 2002). While this is the situation in Kenya, elsewhere in the world the situation has changed to conform to findings of educational research. For example, Darling-Hammond (2000) points out that in some school districts in the United States, there are programs that allow year-long school-based clinical experiences strategically placed at the end of the education program and that enable prospective teachers to devote their energies in preparing to teach.

In Germany, teachers preparing to teach face two full years of internship after coursework that allows faculty to evaluate at least 25 lessons that include seminars and classroom experiences (ERIC Digest, 1986). Secondly, the current model of teaching practice focuses on the classroom teaching experience yet school is not just about teaching but includes other broader features of the school. One area that comes to mind is teacher leadership. Literature and studies suggest that teachers are not just implementers of curriculum decisions and procedures but they too can be involved in the decision making process, as a vital part of their normal teaching role (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster and Cobb, 1995). It can therefore be argued that if leadership is part of teaching, then prospective teachers should be given the opportunity to experience it early, rather than waiting to achieve it at the close of the teaching career as is commonly the case (ibid). Thirdly, placement schools find themselves having to bear with the student-teachers especially because they do not have identified teacher mentors and even when they identify model teachers, these may not have received any training in mentorship. While it is a common practice in other professions for trainees to work with an experienced person, teaching has continued to rely on supervision by faculty to develop the personal and professional attributes in the student teachers. This is limiting as the faculty make few visitations to the placement schools and may not be available for close guidance and conferencing. Additionally, the student teachers make every effort to present their best work when visited, giving a false impression that all is well. Fourthly, the current models of teaching practice do not foster inquiry yet schools and education systems are facing accelerating changes that require understanding, solutions and sometimes adoption of new strategies that are driven by inquiry. This shortcoming is the outcome of traditional teacher education that lacks the capacity to develop in the student-teachers skills of classroom research, reflective practice, problem solving and critical discourse. Lastly, the above models of teaching

practice lead to a prospective teacher who works alone, yet there is an increasing need for teachers to work collaboratively in collegial groups that offer them support in this challenging profession. Most organizations the world over are encouraging team work among their work force and teaching is not an exception. In view of the above reasons and cognizant of the large numbers of those seeking a degree in education in Kenya, this paper proposes a re-conceptualization of teaching practice to capture new dimensions of the school experience in what is an internship-like arrangement. The authors believe that such a re-conceptualization will lead to a teacher of the 21st century who is ready for the job and who will remain in the profession while constantly improving themselves.

### ***10.5 Rationale for Teaching Practice as Internship***

The Board of Teacher Registration (2003), cited by Carpenter and Blance (2007: 7) define internship as "...extended field-based and context-responsive professional learning experiences negotiated collaboratively by stakeholders...with increased opportunities for autonomy, responsibility and accountability with a safety net". This definition best captures the structure, essence and purpose of internship that has informed the argument presented in this paper. Internship is brought out as a collaborative venture that brings the training institution, the placement school and teacher mentors in what is a win-win situation. The school and its staff benefit while the training college and its students benefit. It is also evident from the definition that internship sets out to extend the student teacher's learning in a context where real-world issues are encountered. This is of great importance as it provides the transition from training to actual teaching. While teaching practice concentrates on the classroom practice of the student teacher with a view to assess it, internship provides an opportunity to try out best practice they have observed with assurance of the support of the teacher mentor and faculty. Indeed, internship is a safety net for the prospective teacher. Zugelder and Nichols (2014), aptly describe the interns as developing teachers who can be compared to adolescents in the sense that they require consistent coaching, strong, effective and meaningful communication that leads to specific feedback. The efforts described are driven by the need to assist prospective teachers to love their profession and remain in it even after getting the certificate. A number of studies exist that have examined the issue of teacher attrition and among the key findings is the view that the teachers felt inadequate to handle their job, found the profession lonely and did not have any intrinsic motivation to love their job. If the above situation is to change, then teaching practice should be structured like internship for the following reasons.

First, there is need for an extended school experience that is positioned just before entry into the work place of school. Literature and studies contain evidence of teacher training programs around the world that have up to two-year school experiences with recorded benefits for student-teachers, schools, teacher mentors and even teacher employers (Carpenter & Blance, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2008). According to Darling-Hammond (2008) extended periods of up to one year can result in prospective teachers who are more satisfied with their

preparation and who have positive feelings that Principals, colleagues and cooperating teachers view them as better prepared. While it is not the amount of time spent in the field that is of importance here, but the way the time is structured and the outcome of the interaction that matters most. An extended practicum will mean more coaching and mentoring experiences that will result in collaboration and professional interaction between the student teacher and the mentor teacher. Internship will help faculty and tutors to move away from just visiting the student-teachers with a view of assessing their classroom experience of content delivery, to having dialogue and interaction to tease out the links between theory and practice.

Second, the extended period will allow for intensive clinical supervision that is key to improving the student teacher's classroom practice. The supervision done in current teacher training programs is majorly limited by time factor and the fact that the student teachers put up an act for the sake of supervision. An extended period will allow the student teacher to develop some confidence in their abilities especially because they will work closely with teacher mentors in the school context. According to Zugelder and Nichols (2014), the time used in the internship process will help the student-teacher to be committed to self-improvement, correction and reflection as a result of developing observation skills, skills of inquiry and critical discourse with the teacher mentor. A teacher who strives to better their performance from the onset is likely to stay in the profession and to make positive contribution to their job and learners. While teaching practice concentrates on the classroom experience and is structured to lean towards assessment, internship is deliberate and aimed at extending learning for the student-teacher and assisting them to understand their job clearly in an environment that offers support and guidance.

Third, the extended period will allow for the development of skills and competencies through group dynamics and hands-on experiences that develop over time (Hussain et al, 2010). In a study that was carried out in Islamabad University to evaluate the role of school-based internship, the above author established that an extended period resulted in the professional development of student-teachers, a factor that can enhance the quality of education in schools. While professional development is a goal to aim for in teaching, one cannot overlook the aspect of personal development that includes the development of interpersonal skills, interactional skills and skills of collaboration. In a profession that allows one to meet many people, there is also a possibility of loneliness unless one knows how to acculturate into the team. The longer the stay in the placement school, the more the chances that the student-teacher will be able to find an entry into the group, where they will interact and learn. While teaching practice focuses on identifying the presence of skills and competencies, internship aims to support the development of these skills and competencies through positive coaching and mentoring experiences (Zugelder & Nichols, 2014).

Fourth, internship will provide the time that a student-teacher needs to engage in inquiry that includes classroom research, reflective conversations and personal analysis of performance in the classroom. Agreeing with this view, Darling-Hammond (2008) points out that many professions

including Law, Medicine and Business help their students to bridge the gap between theory and practice by engaging them in inquiry, reading and writing about their practice. The same professions require that the student spends time under a mentor for guidance and assistance. The teaching profession needs to introduce this to the student-teachers if there is to be hope that the profession will grow and improve. Indeed, Oduori (2010) points out that teaching is now recognized as a profession and so the need for its members to be highly competent individuals who are well grounded professionally. This is possible if student teachers develop the skills of inquiry and are keen to chart their professional development right from the training college. For instance, internship will allow students to assemble portfolios that contain artefacts of teaching and learning which they can analyse to enrich their understanding and equip them to better meet the needs of students and schools.

Fifthly, internship will hopefully develop in the student teachers personal and professional attributes that will make them eligible for employment (Carpenter & Blance, 2007). There have been discussions about the quality of teachers who leave teacher training institutions and this could be solved by improving their preparedness through internship experiences. This will happen as they observe good practice, apply the strategies in their practice in classroom while receiving guidance from the teacher mentor. It should be noted that if this process happens before the student teachers enter the profession, then employers will find a pool of talented and prepared teachers who will solve their staffing needs and who will most likely remain in the profession for the love of their work.

Lastly, internship will result in the development of new relationships between placement schools and teacher training institutions. The partnerships developed between practicum schools and teacher training institutions are of mutual benefit to both parties (Fletcher, 2000). Schools usually provide sites for teaching practice and student placement for at most 12 weeks (One term) but with internship, there will be need for more time for the students in the schools. Yet this is also an opportunity for teacher mentors to give back to their profession by working with prospective teachers while at the same time, gaining new ideas that entail current thinking in education (ERIC Digest, 1986). This will be made available during the training given to teacher mentors by the teacher training institutions to reciprocate the services given by schools. Additionally, Carpenter and Blance (2007), posit that working with student teachers will allow teacher mentors time to renew their energy given that teaching is an energy-intensive profession. This is especially when the student teacher takes over the classroom and only requires guidance in challenging areas. For the teacher training institutions, the teacher mentors and the placement schools will provide a real world context for real learning for their students as well as offer services that the institutions may be limited in terms of provision. For the student-teacher, internship is a chance to learn in all parts of the school and not just the classroom, a factor that will produce all round teachers who are able to participate in collective planning, decision making, co-curricular activities and even guiding and



counselling. The above reasons for teaching practice being re-conceptualized as internship now lead to a description of how the internship should be structured.

### ***10.6 The internship Process***

A number of internship models exist in literature and studies that have examined the process of making practicum relevant and effective in preparing prospective teachers for their job. One such model is that used by Griffith University in Australia, at its Centre for Professional Development (CFPD) in their Gold Coast Campus (Carpenter & Blance, 2007). In this model, the internship period follows one school term of school experience where the student teacher works with the faculty to apply theory in practice. In the next school term, internship begins where the co-teacher/mentor sharing a classroom with the student teacher who is assisted to take on the responsibility of classroom teaching. The matching of the student teacher and the teacher mentor is done carefully beginning with the student providing characteristics of the mentor teacher they hope to work with. Teachers also make applications to work as mentors and these are handled by school coordinators who process and pass the applications to the internship committee for final approval and matching.

Once the teacher and student are paired, they collaborate in planning, teaching and assessing with the mentor leading the process for one month. The two then write a report that identifies the areas that are key to the student teacher's development. The mentor evaluates the student teacher in terms of preparation and planning of the lessons, approaches to teaching, relationships with students, collaboration in tasks and other professional qualities. In the next two months of the term, the student teacher shifts from this role to that of the co-teacher and can be left alone in the classroom to experience the job. This is followed by conferencing sessions with the mentor and faculty to discuss challenging areas. To complete the session, both the teacher mentor and the student teacher write a joint report. The result of such a process is a teacher who feels better prepared for the job and confident with their decisions in the classroom (ibid). In view of the Kenyan context and the ever increasing numbers of those seeking a degree in education, the authors of this chapter propose an adaptation of the above internship model that will allow initial supervision and assessment by faculty and later time with the teacher mentor in the placement.

### ***10.7 Implications***

The re-conceptualization of teaching practice as internship has immediate bearing on three groups of people: first are the policy makers in the education sector. Like other countries the world over, Kenya is faced with huge numbers of those seeking to be trained as teachers and thus the challenge of watering down teacher preparation. The policy makers will need to ensure high standards of preparation by monitoring the work of teacher training institutions and especially the implementation of this new aspect by ensuring more funding. The second group is that of practicum schools who now have to contend with having student-teachers for a longer time and will be required to do more in the preparation of these prospective teachers. Indeed for the teacher

mentor, there will be the real challenge of working consistently with the student teacher and to arrive at a point of relinquishing ones classroom to the intern who is a developing teacher. Teacher mentors will require a lot of discipline not to abscond their duties after giving their classroom to the student teacher. The third group is that of teacher training institutions who will be required to train teacher mentors if they have to provide the support that student teachers require during the internship period. According to Fletcher (2000), it is unrealistic to expect a teacher to provide coaching, counselling and assessment without attending mentor development sessions provided by those who require the services of the teacher as a mentor. It is important that teacher training institutions engage in identifying teacher mentors that will work with their students for an effective school experience, as well as provide some reciprocation for the services given by teacher mentors and the placement schools.

### ***10.8 Conclusion***

From the above discussion, it is clear that the component of teaching practice is key and will remain key to the preparation of an effective teacher who will facilitate learning and also be a learner in this century. Yet despite its central role, teaching practice as it is now structured exhibits elements of inadequacy especially in terms of the time taken to link theory and practice in a school experience. It is because of the identified reasons and others that the paper has proposed a re-conceptualization that will result in an extended period in the placement school, more of formative assessment rather than just summative assessment, inclusion of the component of inquiry and collaboration among schools and institutions that train teachers. Like Gujjar (2009), the authors of this paper agree that teaching practice is a milestone in the endless journey of teaching and so how it is structured and executed should be a matter of careful thought. The benefits of an internship like school experience far outweigh the challenges, especially when the student-teacher eventually feels well prepared and is positive that the principal, colleagues and the cooperating teacher view him/her as better prepared. This will mean less attrition and a better profession. Re-conceptualizing teaching practice as internship is a step that will bring teacher training institutions in Kenya at par with others in the world who have embraced this idea, informed by educational research and literature.

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