CHALLENGES IN TEACHING PRACTICE SUPERVISION: PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHER EDUCATORS IN KENYA

Otieno Michael Onyango

Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media, School of Education, University of Kabianga, Kenya

Abstract: The empowerment of women at different levels of leadership in the education sector across the country is notable. However, in secondary schools' leadership; ranging from Deans of Studies, Heads of Departments, and Principals in Co-educational schools, Chairpersons of Boards of Management, Chancellors and Vice Chancellors of major public universities, national polytechnics, and Parent Associations remain a male-dominated entity.

Introduction

Too many, education is an equalizer; however, this research paper seeks to rephrase this common truism in the academic realm by emphasizing quality education. Undeniably, teachers are imperative players in the education sector in Kenya and other countries. However, practice is crucial in preparing future teachers by providing a practical classroom experience that bridges their theoretical gap and professionalism. It is from this fact that this study seeks to analyze the challenges faced by teacher educators while conducting their teaching practice in Kenya. The focus is on training trainee teachers at both primary and secondary levels. The methodology employed encompasses a desk review of relevant books, research papers, and reputable online and journal articles from renowned sources such as Google Scholar, Lexis Nexis, and other related platforms. The study's key findings point out that logistical challenges, lack of standardization in practice, and limited institutional support and capacity building negatively affect teacher educators during teaching practice. This study shows an urgent need to institute systemic reforms in the Kenyan education sector and targeted reforms through policies and practices that will improve the situation. The implications of this study include but are not limited to providing practical solutions to policymakers and stakeholders in the education sector in Kenya to help improve the quality of teacher education and training in Kenya. Despite various improvements in the Kenyan educational system, numerous challenges hinder teacher educators during teaching practice. These challenges, whether arising from contemporary issues or persisting over time, significantly affect the effectiveness of teacher education programs (Mwenda et al., 2013). Addressing these obstacles is critical to preparing confident and competent teachers capable of shaping Kenya's future and contributing to global advancements. While existing literature on teaching practice in Kenya offers valuable insights, most studies focus on student-teacher experiences, neglecting the systemic and

institutional challenges teacher educators face. These educators, who serve as mentors, assessors, and facilitators, play a pivotal role in teaching practice. This study addresses this gap by analyzing teacher educators' challenges and proposing actionable solutions to enhance teaching practice in Kenya, particularly aligning teacher education with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and emerging pedagogical approaches.

Teaching Practice in Teacher Education

Teaching practice is essential in teacher training, providing practical skills and experience for becoming fully-fledged practitioners. Globally, teaching practice equips trainee teachers with hands-on classroom management strategies, bridging the gap between theoretical training and professional application. Teacher training colleges and university departments in Kenya have made teaching practice an integral part of teacher training since their establishment. This tradition is expected to continue, even as education evolves with technological advancements and curriculum changes, such as the CBC (Nganga et al., 2013). Kenya Vision 2030 emphasizes universal access to quality education, which cannot be achieved without enhancing teacher education. Kenya's education system is dynamic, reflecting its efforts to improve quality and respond to global changes. A significant shift occurred with the introduction of the CBC in 2017, which prioritizes learner-centric approaches over exam-focused teaching (Akala, 2021). This contrasts with the 8-4-4 system, which is being phased out, necessitating adjustments in teacher education during teaching practice (Matere, 2024).

The Importance of Teaching Practice in Kenya

Teaching practice bridges theoretical learning and professional application, ensuring that trainee teachers are well-prepared for the classroom. It is a mandatory element for all teacher education levels, enabling educators to guide trainees in lesson planning, classroom management, instructional delivery, and learner assessment (Mukeredzi et al., 2012). Additionally, teaching practice exposes trainees to the realities of the profession, including managing diverse learner abilities and addressing classroom challenges like indiscipline. Teacher educators play a crucial role in improving education quality by preparing teachers to implement the Kenyan curriculum effectively and achieve positive student learning outcomes (Cheruiyot, 2024). Beyond individual training, teaching practice fosters collaboration between the government, training institutions, and schools, creating a robust network of stakeholders in teacher training. However, teacher education in Kenya faces significant challenges that compromise its quality. These include logistical issues, uneven placement of trainee teachers across schools, limited financial resources, overcrowded public schools, inadequate mentorship, and insufficient supervision. The lack of standardization in teacher education during teaching practice exacerbates these issues, leading to inconsistencies in the skills and experiences of trainee teachers (Lucksnat et al., 2024). This inconsistency affects the professional development of trainees. It undermines the overall effectiveness of Kenya's education system, as teaching practice shapes the next generation of teachers (Beraja et al., 2022).

Teaching Practice in the Region

Teaching practice in Sub-Saharan Africa shares similarities in administration and challenges, including logistical issues, lack of standardization, and limited funding (Mandyata et al., 2024). These challenges persist across countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ghana, and they are also evident in Kenya. Addressing these recurring issues requires regional collaboration, such as knowledge sharing on best practices, as emphasized under Sustainable Development Goal 17. Partnerships and collaboration can help tackle logistical challenges and improve regional teacher education quality.

Historical Challenges and Trends in Teacher Education

Kenya's education system was rooted in the colonial period, prioritizing rote learning over teacher centered approaches. This legacy continues to impact teacher education, as training institutions have struggled with limited investments and outdated infrastructure since independence (Gachago & Peart, 2022). Renowned institutions like Tambach, Kagumo, and Kericho Teachers Training Colleges still rely on colonial-era facilities and face staff shortages, undermining the quality of teaching practice (Gichuhi & M'mbone, 2012).

Post-independence reforms have aimed to enhance the system, including regular teacher evaluations and adjustments to education funding models. However, declining budgets in recent years have diminished service quality (Institute of Public Finance Kenya, n.d.). The introduction of the CBC has further underscored long-standing gaps in teacher preparedness, emphasizing the necessity for practical, hands-on training to meet modern educational demands (Murithi & Yoo, 2021).

The Role of Teacher Educators in Teaching Practice

Teacher educators are experienced practitioners preparing trainee teachers for their professional growth and success. Their roles involve guiding classroom experiences, providing constructive feedback, supervising progress, and mentoring trainees during their teaching practice. However, these responsibilities are challenged by issues such as high workloads, limited professional development opportunities, insufficient training on emerging topics like artificial intelligence, and inadequate funding (Chiu, 2024). These challenges diminish the capacity of teacher educators to mentor trainees effectively, affecting the quality of teaching practice in Kenya. Drawing on Kolb's experiential learning theory, this study highlights the critical role of teacher educators in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

The Theoretical Framework on Teaching Practice

Kolb's experiential learning theory serves as the foundation for this study, highlighting the importance of learning through experience and practice. Developed by David Kolb, the theory outlines a continuous learning cycle that includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Nyawira, 2015; Nurunnabi et al., 2022). This framework establishes a basis for understanding the significance of teacher education, particularly in teaching practice.

Methodology

This study utilized a desk review methodology, analyzing primary and secondary sources relevant to the challenges faced by teacher educators in Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa. The research materials

comprised journal articles, institutional reports, government policy documents, books, and credible online articles. Of the 30 resources reviewed, 20 journal and website articles and 10 book chapters were deemed relevant, fulfilling criteria such as publication within the last 15 years and inclusion of empirical evidence. The study utilized databases such as JSTOR, Springer Link, Lexis Nexus, Google Scholar, and Google Books to search for keywords like "Challenges faced by teachers during teaching practice" and "Teacher Education in Kenya." Key themes related to logistical, financial, institutional, and pedagogical challenges were identified and analyzed to inform the findings and recommendations.

Findings and Discussion

Key Challenges Faced by Teacher Educators in Kenya During Teaching Practice

The desk review uncovered various challenges that teacher educators face during teaching practice in Kenya. These challenges have been organized into four main categories: pedagogical, logistical, financial, and institutional. Each category is examined in detail below:

Pedagogical Challenges

Pedagogy encompasses various aspects of teaching, including styles, feedback, and assessment—key areas of responsibility for teacher educators. Despite their pivotal role, teacher educators encounter significant pedagogical challenges that hinder their effectiveness. A prominent issue identified in the study is the insufficient preparation of student-teachers. Teacher educators frequently report that student-teachers struggle to translate theoretical knowledge into practical classroom applications. This gap highlights deficiencies in their training, leaving them ill-equipped for the realities of teaching practice (Cheruiyot, 2024).

Teacher educators frequently engage in field training rather than offering mentorship, thus diverting focus from their primary responsibilities. Further complicating this issue is the absence of ongoing professional development for the educators themselves. Such development is crucial for equipping educators with modern skills and methodologies to effectively train student-teachers (Đerić et al., 2021). Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence are reshaping the education sector globally. However, most teacher educators in Kenya are unprepared to integrate these innovations into their teaching practices (Masinde et al., 2024). Moreover, the introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) has complicated the pedagogical landscape. Many teacher educators remain unfamiliar with the CBC model, which hampers their ability to provide sufficient guidance to trainee teachers. Adapting to the CBC necessitates mastering new and often complex pedagogical approaches (Opondo et al., 2023).

Logistical Challenges

Kenya's vast geographical expanse, which includes 47 counties and a population exceeding 55 million, presents significant logistical challenges for teacher educators. Coordinating the placement of trainee teachers across diverse and often remote locations is a formidable task. Many teacher educators lack the resources to visit all assigned schools, particularly those in hard-to-reach rural areas. The high cost of field visits and inadequate transport infrastructure result in considerable inconsistencies in the

evaluation and supervision of student teachers. These inconsistencies ultimately undermine the overall quality of education (Genvieve, 2017). The uneven distribution of schools further exacerbates logistical challenges. Urban areas tend to have a greater number of schools and better accessibility, resulting in an oversaturation of student-teachers, while rural areas remain underserved. For instance, Nakuru County reported 2,189 schools in its 2016/17 Annual Progress Report, compared to only 781 schools in neighboring Baringo County (County Government of Nakuru, 2018; Baringo County, 2017). This imbalance limits trainee teachers' exposure to diverse teaching environments and hinders the effectiveness of teacher educators in providing equitable supervision.

Inadequate Funding

Financial constraints significantly affect teaching practices in Kenya. The education budget often fails to meet the demands of teacher training due to inadequate budgeting and delays in fund disbursement. Limited budgets hinder teacher educators' ability to conduct school visits and assessments, as travel costs are prohibitive. Delayed funds deter teacher educators from undertaking essential supervisory tasks, compromising the quality of mentorship and supervision for trainee teachers. Furthermore, financial constraints impede the implementation of mentorship programmers, leaving student-teachers without the essential support needed to develop their skills. Institutions frequently operate on limited budgets, which exacerbates these challenges and diminishes the overall effectiveness of teaching practice in Kenya.

Limited Institutional Support

Institutional support, including infrastructure and resources, is vital for effective teaching practice. However, many institutions lack essential tools, such as communication systems, to facilitate interactions among teacher educators, trainee teachers, and host schools (Orodho et al., 2013). These gaps result in inconsistencies in instructions, undermining the clarity and effectiveness of teaching practice. Furthermore, the lack of a standardized framework for teaching practices has led to considerable variations in the implementation of programmers across institutions. Some programmers emphasize certain aspects of teaching practice, whereas others overlook them, resulting in disparities in the training and preparation of trainee teachers. This lack of uniformity negatively impacts the quality of teacher education and the overall experience of teaching practice.

The Impact of the Challenges on Teaching Practice

These challenges—spanning pedagogy, logistics, funding, and institutional support—collectively undermine the effectiveness of teaching practice, as detailed below (Richter et al., 2021). Logistical constraints, for example, limit teacher educators' ability to provide consistent supervision and feedback. Financial limitations also affect the capacity of teacher educators to establish lasting partnerships with host schools, thereby reducing the support available to trainee teachers. This deficiency of support leaves student teachers ill-prepared, undermining both their confidence and competence in classroom settings (Davitadze et al., 2022). When teachers enter classrooms without sufficient preparation or confidence, the cycle of underperformance continues, undermining the quality

of education in Kenya. These challenges underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms to improve teaching practices and teacher education.

Strategies to Address the Challenges

The study suggests various practical strategies to address the challenges encountered by teacher educators during teaching practice:

Increased funding

The government and institutional stakeholders must allocate additional resources to support teaching practices. Increased funding would empower teacher educators to effectively conduct supervision and mentorship throughout all regions. These resources could also facilitate professional development workshops, thereby enhancing the overall quality of teaching practices and education in Kenya. The Ministry of Education must allocate funds transparently and prioritize them. These funds should cover travel allowances, supervision logistics, and mentorship services. Institutions should also adopt financially sustainable models to ensure consistent support for teaching practice.

Standardized Frameworks

Establishing and applying a standardized framework for teaching practice is essential in tackling the fragmentation of processes and procedures. This framework should delineate the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, including teacher educators, student teachers, training institutions, host schools, and government bodies. Standardized guidelines would ensure consistency in practices across institutions, improving the quality of trainee teachers' education. These guidelines should be periodically reviewed to incorporate feedback and adapt to curriculum changes, such as the CBC.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Collaboration among teacher training institutions, host schools, and other stakeholders can help tackle logistical challenges. Partnerships can foster a supportive environment for teaching practice, promoting regular communication and joint training sessions for teacher educators. Such collaborations can also enhance mentorship and guidance for trainee teachers.

The Use of Technology

Technology offers innovative solutions to many of the challenges facing teaching practice. Digital tools such as video conferencing and online observation platforms can bridge supervision gaps, enabling teacher educators to provide feedback without travelling to remote schools. Institution-based digital programmers can train teacher educators in new pedagogical approaches, including those related to CBC. Furthermore, artificial intelligence tools can analyses trends in teaching practices, aiding educators in tailoring their support to the specific needs of student-teachers.

Capacity Building

Continuous professional development is vital for teacher educators to maintain their effectiveness. Capacity-building programmers should concentrate on supervision, mentorship, and emerging issues such as the CBC and new technologies. Workshops and training sessions can expose teacher educators

to global best practices and provide them with the skills necessary to enhance teaching practices in Kenya.

Conclusion

Teaching practice remains a cornerstone of teacher education in Kenya, offering student-teachers vital opportunities to bridge the gap between theory and practice. However, the challenges that teacher educators encounter—financial, logistical, institutional, and pedagogical—pose a threat to the effectiveness of this crucial process. This study underscores the pressing need for systemic and institutional reforms to tackle these challenges. By enhancing investments in teacher education, fostering collaborations, utilizing technology, and standardizing frameworks, Kenya can cultivate a more supportive environment for teaching practice. Such reforms are essential for ensuring that the education system meets the demands of the 21st century (Beraja et al., 2022). While this study offers valuable insights into the challenges faced by teacher educators during teaching practice, further research is essential to achieve a holistic understanding of the issue. Capturing the perspectives of all stakeholders involved in teacher training—such as student-teachers, host schools, and policymakers— would provide a more comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in teaching practice. Comparative studies focusing on the experiences of teacher educators across Sub-Saharan African countries could also provide valuable insights. For instance, future research might examine how Zambia and Ghana handle the placement of trainee teachers in rural schools, offering ideas on practical strategies that Kenya could adopt (Mandyata et al., 2024). These studies can uncover regional similarities and differences, emphasizing shared challenges and unique contexts. Research into emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, for enhancing teaching practices and professional development for teacher educators is another vital area for future investigation. Such studies can enable researchers to effectively integrate these tools into teacher education, addressing logistical, pedagogical, and institutional challenges. Ultimately, future research should focus on deepening our understanding of systemic and institutional barriers, offering evidence-based recommendations to initiate reforms and improve the quality of teacher education and teaching practice in Kenya.

References

Akala, B. M. M. (2021). Revisiting education reform in Kenya: A case of competency-based curriculum (CBC). Social Sciences and Humanities Open, 3(1), 100-107.

Alice, O. (2012). Challenges facing teachers and students in the use of instructional technologies: A case of selected secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Current Issues Instructional Technologies, 1-18. Baringo County Government. (2017). Baringo County Programmed-Based Budget 2017/2018.

Cheruiyot, B. (2024). Evaluating teaching practice in Kenya: Successes and failures. East African Journal of Education Studies, 7(4), 735-741.

Chiu, T. K. (2024). How do emerging technologies CRAFT our education? Current state and future research recommendations related to AI and the metaverse. Interactive Learning

Environments, 32(3), 787-789.

Davitadze, M., Ooi, E., Ng, C. Y., Zhou, D., Thomas, L., Hanania, T. & Kempegowda, P. (2022). SIMBA: Using Kolb's learning theory in simulation-based learning to improve participants' confidence. BMC Medical Education, 22(1), 116.

Đerić, I., Elezović, I., & Brese, F. (2021). Teachers, teaching and student achievement. In IEA Research for Education (pp. 151–174). Springer.

Gachago, V., & Peart, S. (2022). One step forward, one step back inclusive education in Kenya. In International Issues in SEND and Inclusion: Perspectives Across Six Continents. pp. 61-74. Routledge.

Gathumbi, A. W., Mungai, N. J., & Hintze, D. L. (2013). Towards comprehensive professional development of teachers: The case of Kenya. International Journal of Process Education, 5(1), 3-14.

Genvieve, N. (2017). Challenges of administering teacher education programme in Kenyan universities. Journal of Education and Practice, 8(14), 30–33.

Gichuhi, L. W., & M'mbone, M. J. (2012). An evaluation of teaching practice in Kenyan universities. Education, 2(4), 64–68.

Glennerster, R., Kremer, M., Mbiti, I., & Takavarasha, K. (2011). Access and quality in the Kenyan education system: A review of the progress, challenges and potential. Office of the prime minister of Kenya, 2001-2010.

Institute of Public Finance Kenya. (n.d.). The education budget falls short of adequately meeting its performance indicators.

Kerkhoff, S. N., & Makubuya, T. (2022). Professional development on digital literacy and transformative teaching in a low-income country: A case study of rural Kenya. Reading Research Quarterly, 57(1), 287-305.

Kibuku, R. N., Ochieng, D. O., & Wausi, A. N. (2020). E-learning challenges faced by universities in Kenya: A Literature Review. Electronic Journal of E-learning, 18(2), 150-161.

Lucksnat, C., Richter, E., Henschel, S., Hoffmann, L., Schipolowski, S., & Richter, D. (2024). Comparing the teaching quality of alternatively certified teachers and traditionally certified teachers: Findings from a large-scale study. Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, 36(1), 75-106.

Mandyata, J., Masaiti, G., Habwanda, E., Kapamba, M., Walubita, S., Zulu, J., & Zuilkowski, S. S. (2024). Theory, policy, and practice: Bridging the gap between teacher training and classroom practice in language of instruction in Zambia. Language and Education, 38(2), 251-268.

Masinde, J. M., Mugambi, F., & Wambiri, D. M. (2024, October). Exploring the Current Landscape of Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Kenyan Academic Libraries. In Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (pp. 403-408).

Matere, A. (2024). From 8-4-4 to CBC: Emerging issues of transition in education in Kenya: transition in education in Kenya. International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, 16(1), 76-86.

Muchira, J. M., Morris, R. J., Wawire, B. A., & Oh, C. (2023). Implementing competency-based curriculum (CBC) in Kenya: challenges and lessons from South Korea and USA. Journal of Education and Learning, 62-77.

Mukeredzi, T. G., Mthiyane, N., & Bertram, C. (2012). Teaching practice: A make or break phase for student teachers. Education, 2(4), 92-102.

Murithi, J., & Yoo, J. E. (2021). Teachers' use of ICT in implementing the competency-based curriculum in Kenyan public primary schools. Innovation and Education, 3(1), 1-11.

Mwangi, J. (2024). Relationship between Education Funding Allocation and Academic Achievement Disparities. American Journal of Public Policy and Administration, 9(2), 37-47.

Mwenda, J. M., Gichuhi, L. W., & M'mbone, M. J. (2013). Challenges facing teacher education in Kenya. Journal of Education and Practice, 4(15), 159–163.

Nganga, L., Madrid Akpovo, S., Kambutu, J., Thapa, S., & Mwangi, A. M. (2024). Educational policies in early childhood education programs in Kenya and Nepal: Challenging unjust binary mindset around curricula practices. Policy Futures in Education, 22(6), 1150-1168.

Njenga, M. (2023). TVET teacher mentoring in Kenya: valued but poorly implemented. International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, 12(2), 113-127.

Nurunnabi, A. S. M., Rahim, R., Alo, D., Mamun, A. A., Kaiser, A. M., Mohammad, T., & Sultana, F. (2022). Experiential learning in clinical education guided by the Kolb's experiential learning theory. Int J Hum Health Sci (IJHHS), 6(2), 155.

Nyaboke, R., Kereri, D., & Nyabwari, L. (2021). Competence-based curriculum (CBC) in Kenya and the challenge of vision 2030. International Journal of Education, Technology and Science, 1(4), 155-169.

Nyawira, W. J. (2015). Challenges facing teachers in utilizing instructional resources when teaching Mathematics in public secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Kenyatta University. Nairobi: Kenya. https://api. Semantic scholar. org/CorpusID, 152587256.

Olutoyin, B. O. (2024). Exploring challenges faced by student teachers in teaching practice: A research inquiry. European Journal of Educational and Development Psychology, 12(1), 62–71.

Onguko, B. (2012). Teachers' professional development in a challenging educational context-a study of actual practice in rural western Kenya, Doctoral dissertation, University of Calgary.

Opondo, R. O., Afwande, J., & Kamau, L. N. (2023). Challenges facing implementation of competencybased assessment in Kenyan primary schools: Case of Kajiado County. International Journal of Education and Research, 11(1), 21–33.

Orodho, J. A., Waweru, P. N., Ndichu, M., & Nthinguri, R. (2013). Basic education in Kenya: Focus on strategies applied to cope with school-based challenges inhibiting effective implementation of curriculum. International Journal of Education and Research, 1(11), 1-20.