

Discourses that transient into broken bridges for student teachers on teaching practice: A case of primary and secondary schools in Masvingo Province

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ABSTRACT

Building bridges for student teachers is the fountain and link-pin to moulding effective teachers in any system of education. This study seeks to highlight challenges faced by student teachers in primary and secondary schools in Masvingo Province. The study adopted a post-positivist approach rooted in the interpretive philosophy and employed the qualitative research methodology. The population for the study were 250 student teachers who had gathered at a teaching practice workshop at Masvingo Regional Campus. Convenience sampling technique was employed to select information rich participants who were asked to write down narratives on challenges they faced during teaching practice. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were employed as data generation tools as well. The major findings of the study were that student teachers had several challenges rooted in mentoring, pedagogical, time constraints, implementing updated curriculum with the new learning areas, disciplinary issues, lack of textbooks, overloaded classes and teaching periods, supervisor related issues, among others. The study concludes that student teachers find it a rocky road to effectively practice in the absence of a supportive environment. The study recommends that schools should attach student teachers to competent and qualified mentors. Universities and schools should work hand in glove and come up with several seminars and workshops for student teachers so that their practice is made rich.

Key terms: teaching practice; student teachers; discourses; broken bridges

INTRODUCTION

“I cannot teach with clarity unless I recognise my ignorance, unless I find out what I do not know, what I have learnt” (Freire, 1996, p. 2).

Teaching practice is a critical and compulsory course in the teacher education programme (Aglazor, 2017; Mokoena, 2017) not only in Zimbabwe but the world over and its relevance is ‘germane’ (Olugbenga, 2013, p. 236). Teaching practice is the make or break phase for student teachers (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009) and is a central issue on the training of would be teachers. The

professionalisation of the teacher has become the central motif in the public domain in Zimbabwe. There is a general outcry of poor performance by learners due to lack of qualified teachers and the presence of under qualified teachers in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. This article argues that the discourse and philosophy of teacher professionalisation and exposure to the practice of teaching brings quality in teacher training programmes. Clearing student teachers’ concerns and challenges become the roadmap and highway to building their bridges to become effective professionals (Mokoena, 2017).

Teaching practice is an exercise that is carried out by most schools of education in

the rest of the world (Leke-atech, Assan & Debeila, 2013) and is considered as the most challenging experience for student teachers in the teacher education programme (Aglazor, 2017; Broadbent, 1998). Teaching practice is the “**passage**” (St Augustine as cited in Quasten and Plumpe, 1962, p. 145) through which all those who want to be teachers must be funneled through to be effective. Effective teaching requires the teacher to possess a wide knowledge base of teaching (Shulman, 1987). Teaching practice thus brings “**mansions of the heritage**” (R. S. Peters, 1967, p. 92) in which the teachers should strive to live. In Zimbabwe, quite a significant proportion of both primary and secondary school teachers did not receive any preparation for their teaching role. The content they got during their graduate studies was aimed almost solely at promoting their knowledge frontiers of the subject matter rather than their teaching (Hativa, 1997).

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe has gone into a rampage to capacitate its teachers through teacher development programmes. Universities have been given the mandate to develop the teachers in primary and secondary schools who have not received teaching qualifications. Secondary school teachers who hold degrees but lack teaching qualifications were sponsored by the UNICEF through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. These school teachers are offered a programme which takes three semesters called Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PDGE). Primary school teachers who teach Early Childhood Development are also exposed to a degree called Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Development (BECD). The Zimbabwe Open University is among such universities who were given the mandate for teacher capacity development. In these programmes, teaching practice is a major component which is done over one or two

semesters depending on the programme. Student teachers have to undergo a period where they are attached to schools so that they put into practice theoretical foundations which they learnt. Faculties of teacher development have to be on the watch out so that they clear roadblocks for student teachers to practice effectively. The Zimbabwe Open University conducts workshops with student teachers on teaching practice after the first supervision exercise. The workshops aim at highlighting areas of strengths and areas of weaknesses so that they are ironed out.

Teaching practice is a professional training that involves the student in trying to teach pupils in school. For a student to graduate as a qualified professional, one has to undergo the practice of teaching in some school. Several fundamental areas are covered with theory being married with practice while students are on teaching practice. Universities have to fulfill their teaching function by equipping students going on teaching practice with the requisite skills that make them competent in the field. It is argued that:

A more fundamental issue is the extent to which the responsibility for the development of new university teachers has been gradually removed from the traditional academic disciplinary communities of practice and placed in the hands of education specialists, and whether this has undermined the ownership and commitment academic departments should have for the development of the teaching function within the context of disciplinary

cultures and practices
(Mathias, 2005, p. 97).

Initiatives about teaching practice competencies and designs are grounded in the hands of specialist academics who direct how teaching practice is best prepared for by students. There is need for intellectual positioning of student teachers to heighten their teaching effectiveness when they go out for teaching practice. Intellectual positioning of an educational development initiative refers to the intended learning, an emphasis on acquiring either particular content or the tools of on-going professional development (Webster-Wright, 2009). Student teachers have to be placed on the correct pathway to achieving intended goals. Like shepherds who take their flock to greener pastures, student teachers need lecturers to show them the highway and remove stumps that might hinder their smooth performance of their jobs in schools. In line with this thinking, Webster-Wright (2009) concluded that learning at work is different from learning through attending a professional development workshop. Workshops are more practical and experiential and provide the real work experiences that student teachers meet when they are in schools. Student teachers are exposed to changes in pedagogy and practice. McAlpine, Amundsen, Clement, and Light (2009, p. 272) suggested that:

Changes in teaching practice (theories in use) may lead to changes in thinking about teaching and learning (espoused theories) or changes in thinking about teaching and learning (espoused theories) may lead to changes in teaching practice (theories in use).

Student teachers need to be conversant with changes in the school system so that they do not become misfits in curriculum

implementation practices. Workshops and seminars thus become the answer to the conceptualisation of such changes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are many children in school but they seem to be learning very little or nothing. Some school leaders shun student teachers from certain colleges of education advancing the argument that they are not adequately prepared. One of the many criticisms levelled against student teachers in contemporary education is lack of adequate preparation in the practice of teaching. The need for student teachers to become more knowledgeable, competent and skilful in connecting the subject matter to their learners is increasing. Thus the complex and dynamic nature of education today requires teachers to be real teachers who have been baptised in the pool of effective teaching practice sessions. There is need therefore, to look closely with adequate depth and breadth challenges that militate against effective teaching practice by student teachers in Masvingo province, Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the school related teaching practice challenges?
2. What are the supervisors related teaching practice challenges?
3. Which mentoring challenges are encountered during teaching practice?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Teaching practice has its origins in the ideas of craft apprenticeship (Stones, 1984). As education for the mass of the population in industrialising countries began to develop in the nineteenth century, the demand for teachers grew. Existing school teachers catered for the demand by recruiting apprentices from among their pupils as pupil

teachers. The pupil teachers were treated like other apprentices and initiated by a process of instruction, demonstration and imitation. The master teacher told the students what to do, show them how to do it, and students imitated the master (Stones, 1984). There has been a shift from considering teaching practice as apprenticeship to the concept of field experience in a school (Menter, 1989). Teaching practice is the opportune time when student teachers get field experience in the practice of teaching. During teaching practice, a student teacher is given the opportunity to try the art of teaching before actually getting into the real world of the teaching profession (Msangya, Mkoma & Yihuan, 2016, p. 113). Teaching practice provides the teaching experience that student teachers need to develop important professional knowledge which is fundamental in their professional lives (Chimhenga, 2017).

Theoretical Frameworks: Reflective Teaching Practice theory

This study was undergirded by the reflective teaching practice theory. John Dewey's ideas of reflective thinking became the precursor to the development of the theory of reflective teaching practice. In his conception of the term reflective practice, Dewey points out that individuals move from one experience to another with a deeper understanding of their relationship with a previous one (Gheith & Aljaberi, 2018). Schon (1983) conceptualise the reflective practitioner as one who is systematically self-assessing as he/she constantly gets feedback from the external assessment process and is most times preoccupied with early identification of problems and proffering of solutions to them.

Reflective teaching practice entails an ongoing examination of beliefs, and practices, their origins and their impacts on the teacher, the pupils and the learning

process. A major focus of reflective teaching practice is personal growth. The reflective process involves continuous self observation and evaluation of the trainee to understand individual actions and the reactions of learners. The process was conceptualised by Comb (1984) cited in Ogonor & Badmus, (2006) as an action research model whereby people learn and create knowledge by critically reflecting upon their own action and experiences, forming abstract concepts and testing the implications of these concepts in new situations. Reflective teaching practice process consists of the collection of detailed information on the events that happen in the classroom as perceived by the student teacher, as well as observations in working with people, establishing classroom climate and managing instruction, planning of instruction, command of subject, personal and professional qualities (Ogonor & Badmus, 2006). For student teachers to see that there are challenges militating against their effective practice, they need to engage in reflective practice, which is the essence of this study.

LITERATURE

Teaching practice is an important component of becoming a teacher and is a make or break phase for student teachers (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). It grants student teachers experience in the actual teaching and learning environment (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003, p. 18; Marais & Meier, 2004, p. 220; Perry, 2004, p. 2). During teaching practice, a student teacher is given the opportunity to try the art of teaching before actually getting into the real world of the teaching profession (Kasanda, 1995). It is in teaching practice that student teachers are baptised with the experience to gain knowledge of how teachers go about the many and complex tasks involved in actual classroom practice (McGee and Fraser, 2001; Bechuke, Ateh, Assan & Debeila, 2013).

Student teachers know the value of teaching practice. Student teachers perceive teaching practice as ‘the crux of their preparation for the teaching profession’ since it provides for the ‘real interface’ between student-hood and membership of the profession (Menter, 1989, p. 461). As a result, teaching practice creates a mixture of anticipation, anxiety, excitement and apprehension in the student teachers as they commence their teaching practice (Manion, Keith, Morrison & Cohen, 2003; Perry, 2004, p. 4).

Teaching practice is a kind of scholarship. Scholarship, for Weber, is regarded as an ‘inner calling’ in which the individual should demonstrate ‘an inner devotion to the subject and only to the subject [raising] him to the height and dignity of the subject which he claims to serve’ (Weber, 1989, p. 12). It is important to note that teaching practice is a calling, a vocation. This vocation is characterised by passion, inspiration (Weber, 1989, p. 9), and a willingness to ‘overtake’ (Weber, 1989, p. 12) in serving the common goal of scholarship.

Levinson-Rose & Menges (1981, p. 416) carried out a study based on instructional improvement programmes in higher education and found out that the initiative of workshops, seminars and one-to-one consultations were the most common instructional development intervention strategies. Consistent with the above findings are Steinert et al. (2006, p. 509) who do provide evidence that workshops and seminars lay the foundation of effective teaching and provide preliminary grounding for quality practices in teacher preparation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was rooted in the post-positivist philosophy and employed the interpretivist paradigm whose central endeavour is to understand the subjective

world of human experience as well as investigating interaction among individuals (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). This study employed qualitative methodology. Qualitative research places emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people’s words, actions and records (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 16). The researcher employed the qualitative methodology because using the subjects’ words better reflects the postulates of the qualitative methodology. The qualitative research looks to understanding a situation as it is constructed by the participants. The qualitative research attempts to capture what people say and do (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

Convenience sampling was used. In educational settings, an accessible group may be used, what researchers call “convenience sampling” (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993; Gall *et al.*, 1996). Convenience sampling is often used in educational research because of its practical benefits, as it is seldom feasible to get access to the theoretically ideal sample, so researchers “*often need to select a convenience sample or face the possibility that they will be unable to do the study*” (Gall *et al.*, 1996, p. 228). Convenience sampling can involve, for example, an available class of students or a group of people gathered for a meeting (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993). The students who were conveniently sampled included students from Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Development (BECD), Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and Bachelor of Education Secondary (BEDS). When student teachers had been visited once by supervisors, the department of teacher development in Masvingo regional campus invited them for a workshop where they would share with the student teachers observations made during their first visit. The researcher, who was part of the supervision team and workshop presenter, asked the

students to write down narratives on challenges they faced during teaching practice that affected their performance. Semi structured interviews were employed as data generation tools as well. Three focus groups were held for triangulation of data. Each programme had a focus group. The participants who were involved in focus groups were not selected for interviews. Triangulation is a strategy for improving the validity of qualitative research and it provides a rich and complex picture of some social phenomenon being studied (Mathison, 1988). Denzin (1978) suggests using multiple methods for triangulation which was the case in this study. The emerging themes were then categorised with relevant voices given. The BECD group was regarded as FDG 1, PGDE group was FDG 2 with the BEDS group regarded as FDG 3. P in this study represents participant and these were the interviewed participants. N stands for a participant who gave a narrative when they were asked to write their stories on paper.

FINDINGS

Overloaded periods and classes

The issue of too many teaching periods was pointed out as a broken bridge for effective teaching. One of the participants gave a narrative and had this to say:

NI: I had 36 periods on my school load per week and coming up with detailed lesson plans for these periods each week was not a joke. I would end up dodging and omitting to plan some of the lessons due to the overload. You know this overload affected my preparation of media to use during the teaching process.

Student teachers are pointing to the issue of having too many periods to plan for

every day and every week. While planning is the main activity that a student teacher has to meet, some end up failing to plan. Failing to plan is planning to fail. Overloaded periods destroy the energy levels of the teacher and have an impact on the breath and the depth of the curriculum implementation and on teacher effectiveness. Organizational learning is affected by such practices (Mulford & Silins, 2010).

Large class sizes

Large class sizes were found to be a broken bridge for effective practice during teaching and learning. A participant in FDG 2 said the following:

I was given a class of 92 ECD learners yet the recommended class size stipulated by the policy is 1 teacher to 20. So you can see that I am teaching more than four classes. You know I really get exhausted and at the end of the day I cannot do anything. If I continue in that scenario then my teaching practice is totally affected.

Interaction between the teacher and the learner is fundamental during the teaching and learning process. A student teacher who has little opportunity to interact with all the learners gets a false picture of their performance. Large class sizes become a hindrance to effective classroom practice because it provides less practice to the student teacher. The challenge of overcrowded classrooms renders student teachers ineffective (Marais, 2016). Khalid (2019) argues that in overcrowded classrooms, it becomes difficult for the teacher to evaluate all the students at the same time. Where “personalized education” (Waldeck, 2006, p. 345) lacks, class size does

affect teaching styles (Westerlund, 2008). The normal trend in classroom pedagogy is that after explaining and demonstrating a skill, for example, a sewing skill in Home economics subject, each pupil is then given a chance to demonstrate to others. If the class is too big, the pupils would not have the chance to show to others their level of skill grasp and understanding (Farrant, 1985, p. 143).

Time constraints

Students who participated in semi-structured interviews said the following:

P4: I did not have enough time to perfect all my records neither did I have enough time to attend to individual learners in the various learning areas that I taught.

P2: There were a lot of unexpected interruptions that even frustrated me

P3: There is a lot of meaningful supervision of learners that is required but I had challenges in meeting such higher order needs

The purpose of teaching practice is to give the student teacher under guidance, the opportunity to develop and assess his or her competencies and attitudes in the major areas of school activity (Kasambira, 1995, p. 132). This can only happen if there is ample time for student teachers to practice what they are supposed to and lack of it becomes a broken bridge. Teaching practice has a lot of challenges that create a negative impact on the time management of the programme and on the academic knowledge of the learners (Msangya, Mkoma & Yihuan, 2016).

Curriculum changes

The issue of curriculum change brought in challenges in terms of content for various learning areas. What most teachers specialised in at university slightly changed and they were left in a vacuum state. This is expressed by one of the interviewees who said:

P2: The school curriculum has changed and the content has changed too. It is very difficult to catch up with new ways of scheming and planning

The practice of clearing the rocky road for student teachers through capacity building and systems of accountability are being pointed out as critical for effective curriculum implementation. Effective schools are characterised by advance empowerment (Mulford & Silins, 2011) of student teachers.

In the same vein one of the participants from FDG 1 had the following to say:

FDG 1: We lack thorough training through workshops of the strategies to attack the new curriculum. You know the have brought in many new learning areas we are not versatile in. We also need to be taught how best to teach the new learning areas otherwise we waste learners' time.

It is argued that student teachers from the higher education landscape are not adequately prepared for their teaching role, have unsophisticated conceptions of teaching and learning, and have little knowledge of effective teaching practices, both in general and in their own specific discipline unless they have received workshops on the actual practices (Evers & Hall, 2009). To that end,

departments of teacher development in universities have to pursue a number of ways to develop teaching practice. Higher education institutions have to come up with a philosophy that underlies effective principles and guidelines in a bid to capacitate students going out on teaching practice. The thinking here is that student teachers need to acquire skills, techniques and methods, in a meaningful way and these must be understood through the lens of the specialist lecturer who is in the teacher development discipline of that institution.

Local and university-based supervisor-related problems

The issue of supervisors tormenting student teachers was raised by participants during interviews. They said the following:

P3: Some supervisors took teaching practice as a fault finding exercise and looked at weaknesses only. The marks that were awarded did not tally with the effort that we put. The comments given were quite unrealistic.

P2: The session groomed and upgraded my professional and intellectual growth. Before this, I admit that I was cheating innocent souls.

P5: After overwhelming student participation during the lesson, the supervisor would tell you that this is a repeat lesson. You would wonder what the supervisor expected me to do.

Supervision is not a fault-finding mission and student teachers were astonished to realise that both school based and university-based supervisors were at war with them. Sergiovanni and Starrat (2002)

suggest that the exchange between supervisor and the novice teacher must be trusting, open and flexible to allow both to speak from their own sense of integrity and that a human relations supervisor should adopt shared decision making practices to facilitate teacher satisfaction.

Communication challenges

The problem of poor communication is riding high from this group. Participants in the interview had this to say:

P2: Communication between the school leadership and us as student teachers is rather too instructive. I think they forget that we are also human beings who need to be told properly.

P4: Our school leader never had time with me to shape me. You could see that they avoid talking to us as student teachers. We are four at our school and at least it was good if they call us in the office and help us where we are lacking rather than shouting at us even in front of other teachers. That is a hard time for me because I feel that the self in me has been destroyed.

Student teachers are pointing to lack of effective communication in their schools and this becomes a broken bridge for them to practice teaching effectively. Communication is the lifeblood of a school and is a vital enabler of effective and productive human interactions (Albalawi & Nadeem, 2020) and if done poorly, then the nerve system of the school is destroyed. Drake and Roe (2003) argue that school principals and teachers should exchange ideas, brainstorm, trade experiences, discuss alternatives and generate data about areas of

interest. Improved communication platforms are critical for student teachers to gain professional knowledge from such discourses. This is critical for continuous development of the student teacher.

Mentoring challenges

Mentoring is a skill that a mentor has to acquire. It is important that a mentor becomes a knowledgeable person who possesses the mechanics of the field. Failure to have such a site guide results in broken bridges for student teachers on teaching practice. Interviewees had these stories to tell:

N1: Mentors are a big challenge in the secondary schools. My mentor was not qualified and had a non-teaching degree. I wondered how this person could be my mentor yet I am already in the process of becoming a teacher. Accepting the assistance from my mentor in that kind of scenario was a very big challenge for me.

N2: The mentor's comments on effective teaching were not clear. I could not find the head and tail about it.

N3: My mentor always told me that I am lazy, not time conscious and attributed all learners' failure to me, hey.

It is important for mentors to realise that they should educate, mentor, nurture and improve the transition of student teachers from initial teacher education to qualified status and beyond (Gordon, 2020). Mentors are guardians who should not lock the gates for student teachers to learn. Chapman and Burchfield (1994) observed that those individuals selected for leadership but lack formal training in instructional supervision

may not command sufficient respect among teachers. In the same vein, it is argued that an instructional supervisor unfamiliar with proven supervisory techniques and strategies will perform poorly or will slide into 'supervision avoidance' (Kosmoski, 1997, p. 25).

Pedagogical challenges

Student teachers pointed to pedagogical challenges in the various platforms they were. They had this to say:

N5: I was totally confused in the way I employed the various teaching methods. It was extremely difficult for me to make a mix of them in one lesson.

FDG1: Teaching a large class makes one gets puzzled. The teaching methods advanced by progressive and constructivist educators which call for learner centred methods like experimentation, discovery, among others, require one to have a reasonably sized class. Even marking large piles of books at the end of the day discourages one from giving constructive feedback. One would just end up putting a tick or marking wrong things.

Student teachers face several challenges particularly lack of sufficient knowledge of learner-centred teaching (Du Plessis, 2020). Lack of sufficient knowledge of pedagogical and didactical principles is ranking high in this theme. Failure to employ a varied array of teaching methods is tantamount to failure in effective teaching and learning. It is important to have a knowledge base that is broad in terms of pedagogical methods as this is crucial for

clarity of instruction. The knowledge base for effective instruction consists of several categories which include, among others, general pedagogical knowledge, that is, knowledge of pedagogical principles and techniques that is not bound by topic or subject matter (Wilson, Shulman & Richert, 1987, p. 114).; and knowledge of self, i.e., teachers' knowledge of their personal values, dispositions, strengths and weaknesses, and their educational philosophy, goals for students, and purposes for teaching (Grossman, 1995; Wilson et al., 1987). Hativa (2000) argues that broken bridges for student teachers arise when they are lacking the proper pedagogical knowledge and when they do not know what makes effective instruction. Student teachers need guided reflection to develop their pedagogical practices for effective teaching (Kwenda, Adedorff & Mosito, 2017).

Staff attitudes towards the student teacher

Negative attitude towards student teachers is cause for concern. Student teachers thus point to lack of freedom to practice because of the negative atmosphere portrayed by other teachers. These are their stories:

P1: Some qualified teachers really looked down on me and my interpretation of such looks were that they think I know nothing in this field. That really prickled me and got disappointed.

P5: The attitudes of qualified teachers towards me reduced my motivation to teach. I was rather traumatised by their attitudes and behaviours that downgraded my status even in front of the learners in our class.

It is important to realise that the broken bridge in this case is a result of negative attitudes by qualified teachers towards student teachers. Such negative attitudes become broken bridges for student teachers to effectively learn to teach. Teaching practice is the culminating point and bedrock upon which the student teacher builds his/her professional identity (Aglazor, 2017) and displaying negative attitudes might build broken bridges for character moulding by student teachers.

Lack of adequate textbooks for use

Lack of textbooks is a worrisome issue for student teachers. In their focus groups they had the following to say:

FDG1: Textbooks a key resource in the process of teaching and learning. Schools that we practice in lack adequate textbooks and this is a big challenge. No matter how resourceful you might be asked to be, textbooks are the fountain and pillar to transform knowledge among learners. The idea of making learners share textbooks is impractical. Our schools are in rural areas where learners stay in different villages. If you give them work to do then it becomes a non starter because they cannot meet due to distances. So the following day you ask them to make presentations and they will tell you that they had no access to textbooks.

The climate of accountability for schools goes beyond providing classrooms and chalk to include provision of adequate text books. World Bank (2011) argues that

books are effective in raising test scores. It further argues that where there are really no textbooks in schools, virtually no learning takes place. Allan, Clarke & Jopling (2009) argue that effective teaching requires the provision of supportive material, of which text books are a critical component.

Lack of teaching and learning materials

Lack of teaching and learning materials was regarded by student teachers as a broken bridge for them to practice effectively. This is what they said:

P1: For lessons that I wanted to use ICT in delivery, I could not get that due to paucity of the facility in the school

P2: We are now in the world of computers and it is a big challenge if they are not available in the school like in the case of school X where I was practising.

P3: The problem of general lack of teaching and learning resources affected the quality of my teaching. Learners would crowd on the thinly provided resources.

P4: Sometimes we would scramble for classrooms to use for teaching because they were not enough.

P5: It is boring to teach a class without adequate resources. You end up cutting the lesson short.

Participants expressed that it is important for schools to provide teaching and learning materials. The issue of congesting learners on thin resources does not provide student teachers with the proper ways of engaging the learners. Chances to learn are

minimised for learners who lack adequate reading material (Berlin & Cienkus, 1989). Learning is successful when teachers are empowered with resources for teaching and learning (Day, Stobart, Sammons, Kington & Gu, 2006).

Lack of discipline by some student teachers

Participants pointed to lack of discipline by some of the student teachers as a broken bridge to effective teaching. They had this to say:

FDG2: Some student teachers lack self discipline and fail to plan for lessons. The school head and the mentor chase them on daily basis to make sure that they submit their lesson plans and other records. You know, it is not professional to stand in front of a class without a plan. Surprisingly enough, you find some student teachers without any plan at all.

In the teaching fraternity, planning is the fulcrum of effective teaching and learning. Without a plan, there is no teaching because you do not have objectives to achieve and even the methods to employ. Planning is an ingredient for effective teaching practice and increases proficiency in teaching (Cilliers, Fleisch, Prinsloo & Taylor, 2018). Discipline is thus quite critical by the student teacher to make all records available. It is argued that discipline constitutes half the education of the student, if that half is missing then the rest is useless (UNESCO, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that student teachers who man overloaded classes and have overloaded periods become ineffective

during their teaching practice and end up failing to prepare for lessons thoroughly. Lack of discipline among some student teachers affects their performance in the process of teaching practice. The paucity of teaching and learning materials like textbooks negatively affects the practice period for the student teachers. Where student teachers do not get competent and qualified mentors, this becomes a broken bridge because they end up getting very little advice on the practice of teaching. Supervisors who observe student teachers are not motivating them enough. Student teachers lack adequate preparation in handling the new curriculum in terms of the learning areas that have been brought into the school curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above conclusions, the study recommends that student teachers should be engaged in several workshops to familiarise them with the new curriculum changes so that their practice of teaching is enhanced and also develop their pedagogical skills. Mentors should be exemplary to student teachers so that they improve the quality of their practice and also schools should attach the student teachers to qualified mentors. School leadership should provide adequate teaching and learning materials in order to improve self-efficacy among student teachers in their practice of teaching.

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