



Factors that Determine the Quality of Teacher Preparation and Competence among Teacher Educators in Kenyan Universities

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ABSTRACT

It is imperative that competent teacher educators are hired by teacher preparation institutions so as to mentor student teachers appropriately. It is expected that a well trained-educator, models teaching practices as it should be in secondary schools. However, some of the teacher-educators are not trained teachers, which raises the question; who should prepare these teachers? This paper sought to establish the factors that influence competence among teacher educators in universities. The study was conducted in six selected universities in Kenya. The research paradigm adopted for this study was social constructivism worldview. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample that comprised of Bachelor of Education fourth year students drawn from three Public universities and three Private universities, Teacher Educators and Heads of Departments from the faculty of Education. Stratified random sampling was used to select universities, student-teacher and Teacher Educators. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules, observation checklists and document analysis. It is strongly recommended that teacher education programmes should be urgently reviewed by addressing the various factors that are affecting preparation of teachers at university level. It is hoped that the finding of this study will be useful to University curriculum planners and teacher educators in designing courses that are responsive to the needs of the society.

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Introduction

The competence of a teacher-educator to some extent influences the preparation of teachers. According to Calderhead et al.(1997), teacher educators are the most influential actors in shaping teacher development and education systems in a country and therefore should be competent to undertake their tasks .Macleod (2007, p. 2) demonstrates the great impact teacher educators have in the education of a country. He thus states that:

Most teacher educators have a massive impact, perhaps even far more than eternity affecting teacher. Classroom teachers may affect the lives of say fifty or sixty children in their classes every year, but teacher educators may affect the lives of fifty or sixty student teacher in their classes every year, each of the beginning teachers may in turn affect the lives of fifty or sixty children each year .This means that the teacher educator has affected fifty times fifty or sixty times sixty children's lives yielding totals of two thousand five hundred to three thousand six hundred children (p. 2).

Currently, there is no training institution in Kenya specifically designed to prepare teacher-educators in higher education on how best to instruct and support student teachers. According to Holye and Jones in Furlong *et al* (2000),like other faculty members it is assumed that teacher educators are qualified by virtue of advanced graduate study, scholarly activity and competent instructional performance, knowledge of school curricula, school teaching experience

and continuing contacts with the school Leskiw Girhinoy in Furlong *et al* (2000). Accordingly teacher educators should perform three basic functions of faculty of education ,prepare teachers, add knowledge about teaching and learning and assist in disseminating this knowledge to school practitioners. Acquisition of the above competence calls for a special program geared towards preparation of teacher educators of the university. The expertise that they possess has been acquired through their own personal experience and therefore, has not been subjected to any open critical scrutiny. This therefore contributes to lack of uniformity in teaching approaches in teacher preparation. Nixon *et al.* (2000) have argued that universities should be committed to the professional renewal of teacher educators. They recommend a professional induction and strategies to support CPD for teacher educators including a research identity .This would enable them to mentor student teachers effectively.

According to Taylor and Wasicsko (2000), teacher trainer attitudes, values and beliefs about students, themselves strongly influences and impacts on students learning and development. This implies that teacher educators with positive attitudes, with the right tools to work can easily influence positive attitudes in student teacher.

One of the important factors that determine the quality of education in a country is the preparation of teachers in teacher-education institutions (Mohammed,2010; Lucas, 1972).This indicates that institutions engaged in teacher preparation play a vital role in advancing education and in general development of a country.

In particular, a high degree of teacher preparation will translate into an overall high quality of education, while an insufficient degree of teacher preparation will result in an unsatisfactory level education.

Since the early 1990s, academic researchers have observed that Kenyan universities are insufficiently preparing teacher-trainees and therefore producing low quality teachers for secondary schools (Kiptoon, 1996; Karugu, 2006; Mwiria *et al.*, 2007; Eshiwani, 2008; Kafu, 2010). One of the causes identified by these researchers is the fact that the teacher education curriculum has remained unchanged since 1970. This poses a challenge because this old curriculum is narrow and rigid, and it therefore insufficiently equips teacher-trainees with the necessary skills to respond to changing needs of learners (Kafu, 2006). The consequences of this, the research suggested, is a dwindling in the degree of quality of secondary school teachers in Kenya.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Private and Public universities in Kenya which offer professional undergraduate degrees in the teaching profession.

The study involved both qualitative and quantitative approaches so that the overall strength of a study is greater (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The target population comprised the Heads of Departments, lecturers all drawn from the School of Education and other schools that offer subject content to student teachers, Fourth year Bachelor of Education students. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the institutions engaged in the preparation of post-primary teachers as in the table below.

Type	Institution/ University	Heads of Department	Teacher Educators (Lecturers)	Students
Public	A	4	31	150
	B	4	28	130
	C	3	25	108
Private	D	2	12	30
	E	2	10	15
	F	2	8	15
Totals		17	114	448

Questionnaire, interview schedule and observation checklist were the data collection techniques used in this study.

Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics which consisted of frequencies, percentages and means.

Results and Discussions

Factors Influencing Competence of Teacher Educators

Opinions were sought from teacher educators on what they felt were the factors that affecting their competence in the University.

Instructional Approaches Used by Teacher Educators in Public and Private Universities

Instructional approaches are influenced by among other factors, availability of resources and facilities and time taken to prepare the lesson, the financial expenses and the expertise of the lecturer. There was need to find out how often the teacher educators use various methods to deliver their lessons and to identify the instructional approaches used by teacher educators in both Public and Private Universities to prepare teachers. The results are as presented in tables 1 and 2 for teacher educators in Public and Private Universities respectively.

Table 1. Instructional approaches used by teacher educators in public universities.

Public Universities			
Instructional method	Not at all	Occasionally	Always
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)
Lecture	2(2)	7(8)	75(89)
Discussion	18(21)	35(42)	31(37)
Field Trip	36(43)	8(10)	40(47)
Simulation	29(35)	55(65)	9(11)
Tutorials	70(83)	1(1)	13(16)
Practical activity	23(27)	27(32)	34(41)
Demonstration	20(24)	29(34)	35(42)

Table 2. Instructional approaches used by teacher educators in private universities.

Private Universities			
Instructional method	Not at all	Occasionally	Always
	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)
Lecture	0(0)	8(73)	22(73)
Discussion	5(17)	10(33)	15(50)
Field Trip	5(17)	3(10)	22(73)
Simulation	20(77)	0(0)	10(33)
Tutorials	15(50)	5(17)	10(33)
Practical activity	9(30)	6(20)	15(50)
Demonstration	6(20)	7(23)	17(57)

The findings presented in tables 1 and 2 reveal that 2(2%) teacher educators in Public and 0(0%) in Private Universities do not use lecture at all while 7(8%) in Public and 10(33%) in Private use lectures occasionally and an overwhelming majority 75(89%) in Public and 22(73%) in Private Universities use lecture methods always in delivering their content.

Use of this method may be attributed to the fact that lecturing do not require special learning resources and is convenient to large classes. Further it saves on the learning facilities such as lecture halls and the teaching staff. Many groups of students can be combined and taught by one lecturer. This method has been adopted by most universities. This finding is consistent with Mwiria *et al.* (2007), Wanyonyi (2008) and Mwaka (2010), who posit that lecturing at the universities dominate other methods of instructional delivery. They attribute these to adequate facilities and large classes and the convenience of the method in dealing with large classes.

It was noted that discussion method was not used at all by 18(21%) teacher educators in Public universities and 5(17%) in Private universities, 35(42%) teacher educators in Public and 10(33%) in Private universities indicated that they used the method occasionally while 31(37%) teacher educators in Public and 15(50%) in Private indicated that they used the method always. These findings may be attributed to the fact that discussion method can be used together with lecture method. It is interesting to note that 18(21%) in Public and 5(17%) in Private do not use it at all thus pointing to limited teaching methods which tend to contribute to ineffective teaching. According to Kocher (1992) Discussion helps students to discover what they do not know, what they have overlooked and where they are mistaken both in facts and their interpretation. Student teachers should therefore be equipped with this method of teaching so as to utilize it to promote learning in their classrooms later when they become teachers.

Field trip method was found not to be used at all by 36(43%) teacher educators in Public and 22(73%) in Private Universities while 40(47%) in Public and 3(10%) in Private

Universities used field trip occasionally and very few 8(10%) teacher educators in Public and 5(17%) in Private institution used it always. This could be attributed to the fact that field trip require lots of resources in terms of materials and time. Large number of students cannot allow the lecturer to utilize this method always. It is however disappointing to note that an overwhelming majority do not use this method at all. It is however disappointing that field trip was one of the areas student teachers considered inadequately utilized. Unless student teachers experience this in their own training, it would be difficult for them to use the method in their classrooms later, consequently denying the learner varied types of learning experience.

Simulation method was noted not to be used at all by a majority 55(65%) teacher educators in Public and 20(77%) in Private while 29(35%) in Public and 0(0%) in Private Universities indicated the occasional use of this method and 9(11%) in Public and 10(33%) in Private indicated that they always use the method. It appears this method is rarely used by most teacher educators. This method is suitable for teaching small groups, usually 3-5 individuals per group. This is not possible when dealing with large numbers of students yet it is one of those methods that student teachers should be exposed to as it motivates and involve learners for effective learning.

Tutorial method was noted not to be used at all by a majority 70(83) teacher educators in Public and 15(50%) in Private Universities, while 1(1%) in Public and 10(33%) in Private indicated to use tutorial method always. An overwhelming majority do not use tutorials despite its important contribution to effective learning. Again large numbers and limited facilities do not allow this method to be utilized. Effective tutorial sessions would require use of many rooms and adequate tutors; this had been noted earlier as inadequate in most teacher preparation institutions (Kafu, 2010) and (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Tutorials are supposed to supplement lectures and clarify concepts that were not well understood during lecture.

Practical activity method was found not to be used at all by 23(27%) teacher educators in Public and 15(50%) in Private. Teacher educator in Public 4(41%) indicated occasional use of practical activity and 6(20%) in Private Universities indicated to use it occasionally while 27(32%) in Public and 9(30%) in Private indicated that they use it always. It is clear from the findings that 38(33%) of teacher educators in both Private and Public do not use practical method at all in spite of its importance in teacher preparation. This is consistent with the student teachers views that they feel ill prepared to handle practical lessons in their classes. This compromises the competence of student teachers who are expected to conduct these lessons later in schools. Inadequate practical sessions are detrimental to the development of competent teachers of subjects like sciences and languages.

On how often they used demonstration method to teach 20 (24%) teacher educators in Public and 17 (57%) in Private indicated that they do not use the method at all while 35 (42%) in Public and 7 (23%) in Private indicated that they use it occasionally. However 29 (34%) in Public and 6 (20%) in Private indicated that they always use the method.

It is surprising that demonstration is not commonly used by most lecturers in both categories of universities yet this is a method most effective especially when the learning materials are inadequate. Learners can observe procedures

through demonstration without requiring much of the learning resources. The small number of lecturers that use this method could be those handling small groups of students. Demonstration requires a lot of time for preparation as it involves the presentations of prearranged series of events to students for their observations. Further the physical environment should be carefully arranged to enable all learners to observe it. This however poses a challenge to lecturers handling large classes. It implies that student teachers are not well prepared to practice this method later in their classrooms. An effective demonstration requires the use of many teaching aids which may not be adequate for large classes. This finding is consistent with Okioma (2010) who asserts that teachers are ill equipped to handle practical lessons once they are in schools. It appears that most lecturers use teaching strategies that do not demand the use of specialized equipment of facilities due to the inadequacy of the university.

This study also identified some challenges that influenced teacher educator's competence. This was important as these challenges would determine the quality of teacher preparation. The teacher educators were asked to rank the challenges in order of how they affect their teaching at the University, the ranking ranged from 1-5 scale one being the most great and five being the least great as follows; 1- most great, 2- great, 3- average, 4 somewhat great and 5- least great.

As established in the study, the teaching at the University is affected by several factors which include overloaded and irrelevant curriculum; inadequate learning facilities; poor quality students; and heavy teaching. The teacher educators ranked the factors and as indicated in Table 3. Overloaded and irrelevant curriculum was ranked first by 16% of the teacher educators, 11% ranked it second and third, while 21% ranked it fourth and the majority, 41% ranked it as the fifth. Inadequate learning facilities was ranked first by 61%, a majority of the respondents, it was ranked second by 14% of the respondents, third by 11%, 9% of the teacher educators ranked it fourth as only 2% ranked it fifth. On whether the ranking of poor quality of the students at the university as a challenge, 7% of the respondents ranked it first and second respectively, a majority 52% ranked it third, 7% ranked it fourth as 27% of the teacher educators ranked it fifth. Heavy teaching load was ranked first by 53% of the teacher educators, 11% ranked it second third and fourth while 14% ranked it fifth. The findings indicate that the challenges were noted by the teacher educators to affect the teaching and learning at the university though their views were varied. Generally as depicted in the findings, overloaded and irrelevant curriculum; inadequate learning facilities; poor quality students; and heavy teaching were noted as factors which affected the teaching and learning at the university.

The study identified overloaded and irrelevant curriculum; inadequate learning facilities, poor quality students and heavy teaching load as challenges that affect the competence of teacher educators at the university. Teacher educators were asked to rank the challenges in order and as shown in Figure 1, the challenges were ranked first by 31% of the teacher educators, second by 11%, third by 22%, fourth by 12% and fifth by 22% of the teacher educators who participated in the study.

It is clear that inadequate learning facilities and heavy teaching load affect teacher educator competencies. This is due to the rapid expansion of the institutions of higher

learning without commensurate increase of learning resources and teaching staff. This is a challenge which will linger for a while until universities peg their student admission to learning facilities and resources which again beats the spirit of providing access to higher education.

Over-loaded and irrelevant curriculum was noted as affecting teachers' competence. Most institutions of learning have not been consistently reviewing the curriculum in line with the changes in the Ministry of Education, secondary schools curriculum and global needs. This was noted by Kafu (2011) in his discussion on emerging issues in Teacher Education in Africa.

Figure 1 shows the general ranking of both teacher educators from private and public universities.

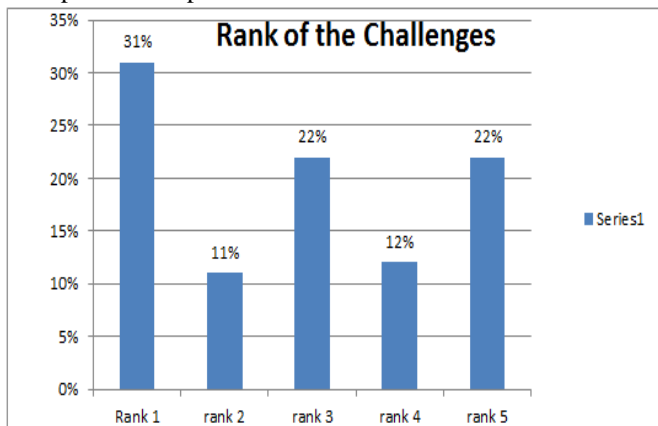


Figure 1. Teacher, educators' Ranking of the Challenges.

Over-loaded and irrelevant curriculum, inadequate learning facilities, poor quality students, and heavy teaching load were the noted challenges. The 31% of the teacher educators ranked these challenges first, 11% second, 22% ranked them third and fifth as 12% ranked them fourth. These could be attributed to the fact that the minimum entry qualification is observed in all the Universities, the curriculum is the same, despite differences in student population in Public and Private, and infrastructural endowments in Public and Private Universities, with the later having more facilities and lower teacher educator – student's ratio.

Table 3. Challenges Influencing Teacher Educators' Competence.

Challenge	Means score of rank in institutions	
	Public University	Private University
In adequate learning resources and facilities	1.8	2.1
Heavy teaching load	2.2	4.2
Irrelevant Curriculum	3.4	3.3
Overloaded	3.4	3.0
Poor quality students	3.6	3.8

There was need to find out whether the newly appointed teacher educators are inducted to the effective teaching at the universities so as to model good teaching practices to students and deliver content effectively. This was found important as some of the appointed teacher educators may not be trained teachers or have had teaching experience and therefore require induction into teaching. The response on this was as follows: 19(63) and 19(39) teacher educators in Public and Private Universities were positive while 46(55) and 11(37) felt otherwise, 5(6) and 0(0) teacher educators had no opinion. The findings clearly show that the majority 55% in Public universities are not inducted by their department. At

least Private Universities seem to be doing better than the Public universities. When new lecturers are not inducted their competencies are likely to be compromised. As such, lecturers would not know the teaching strategies that are emphasized by various disciplines thus fail to deliver as expected. Consequently, they will not model good teaching practices to student teachers.

Induction in any profession is critical to the achievement of its goals. From the findings, it is assumed that new lecturers do not require induction and therefore, are left to start teaching without any guidance. This implies that there is no uniformity in teaching within the department which may affect the standard of teaching. As discussed earlier teacher educators do not have a professional training in teacher preparation, consequently without induction teacher educators may not master the skills and ethos of the classroom for effective teaching. In addition lack of induction to new lecturers affects the quality of teacher preparation adversely given that some of the teaching staff are on part-time basis and may not understand fully the vision and mission of the various universities they offer their services. The Heads of Departments confirmed that formal induction programs were conducted in the Universities for the new lecturers once in a while, during which new lecturers were briefed on their duties and responsibilities in the departments. These programs were more pronounced in the Private Universities than the Public. These could be attributed to the emphasis placed on induction programs in Private Universities for quality education in order to compete effectively and attract more students to their programs. It is important to note that lack of uniformity in lesson delivery is likely to arise when new lecturers are not adequately inducted by the department.

On whether poor working conditions affect effective teaching at the university, 40% of the teacher educators from Private Universities agreed as a similar number disagreed while 20% were undecided. In Public Universities, a majority 60% of the teacher educators agreed, 2% were undecided as 38% disagreed. As indicated in the findings, it is clear that the majority feel that poor working conditions affect effective teaching at the university, while those that had no opinion could be those who are newly employed and are not familiar with the terms and conditions of service. Those who are not affected by the poor conditions could be those whose institutions have put up very good modern infrastructures. These poor conditions may have for reaching repercussions on teacher preparation.

Changing needs and roles of teachers was noted as a challenge by 4% and 13% of the teacher educators from Public and Private Universities respectively, and while students cited financial difficulties and lack of books and inadequate time as a challenges by 6% and 5% of the teacher educators from Public Universities as 13% of the teacher educators from Private Universities noted the same.

Conclusion

There are many factors that affect the quality and competence of teacher educators in Kenya, they include: heavy teaching load, overloaded curriculum, irrelevant curriculum, quality of students, methods of teaching that are commonly used which utilize expository approach at the expense of other innovative methods, poor working conditions and inadequate induction for new lecturers.

The performance of lecturers in teacher education program is not meeting the expectation of the Kenyan general public.

The performance of secondary school teacher is a major concern, as indicated by task force report (2012) that there is a general consensus that secondary school teachers are not well prepared.

Recommendation

There is need to conduct more studies to establish other factors that impact on teacher preparation.

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