

LEARNING TO TEACH AND TEACHING TO LEARN: EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PRACTICE IN IMPROVING STUDENT TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of school practice in improving student teachers' pedagogical practices in West Nile, Uganda. Specifically, the study sought to examine the effectiveness of school practice supervision in improving student teachers' planning and preparation skills; presentation and delivery skills and determine the effectiveness of school practice supervision in improving student teachers' self-evaluation skills, which forms the frame work of quality teaching and learning process. The study was conducted among Muni university final year student teachers pursuing Bachelor of science with education. Concurrent mixed method research was employed to collect data from school practice supervisors (n=12) and final year student teachers (n=46). Quantitative data was collected using pretested, standardised supervisors' assessment forms. Qualitative data was gathered by identification of major themes from the school practice reports by each student teacher and during debriefing meeting after school practice using Focused Group Discussion. Findings revealed that professionally conducted school practice supervision greatly enhanced student teachers' lesson preparation and planning, lesson delivery and presentation, and self-evaluation skills. However, some student teachers still demonstrated low competence in record management and use of instructional materials. The study therefore, recommended that mentors at all levels should put emphasis on ensuring that student teachers exhibit high level of creativity and innovativeness in the entire teaching learning process, if universities are to transform education system in our country. Supervisors should treat school practice as a non-judgmental, but rather, a mentorship exercise tailored towards the professional growth of student teachers. Enforcement of strict adherence to the quality assurance standards on the organization and management of school practice in education training institutions by National Council for Higher Education should be ensured through standardised quality checks and monitoring program.

KEYWORDS: School practice; Reflective practice; Lesson assessment; Classroom observation

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the international movement of Education for All (EFA) and in a bid to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, all states are mandated to invest in education as a fundamental human right (UNESCO, 2014). The status of teacher training and development cannot be underestimated if the country is to attain equitable and quality education for all. Thus, the concern about teacher quality is paramount to all states because, “the quality of education of any country including African countries, is not better than the quality of its teacher.” Against this backdrop, Ugandan government has, since the introduction of formal education by the missionaries in 1877, embarked on key interventions to improve teacher quality right from pre-service to in-service teacher trainings (Ssekamwa, 1997). Formal teacher education started in 1898 when the Church Missionary Society (CMS) mounted a teacher training school in Mukono, Uganda. From 1955, the government of Uganda kept setting academic qualifications for those who were to be trained as teachers. Since then, Uganda has for decades been recognized for producing quality secondary teachers, with the climax when Makerere university was founded in 1922 and later the establishment of National Teachers’ colleges and other public and private universities (Malunda, Onen, & Oonyu, 2016).

In Uganda, Quality assurance is being maintained by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) through Directorate of Education Standards (DES) and National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). The DES mission is “to provide a rational system of setting, defining and reviewing standards and quality of education and sports, and to monitor the achievement of such standards and quality to ensure continually improved education and sports in Uganda’ (Republic of Uganda, 2010). Specific objectives of DES are to develop guidelines for operations in educational institutions; Develop instruments and quality indicators for assessing standards; Inspect and support supervision; Report on the state of education and provide expert advice on education achievements; Develop quality indicators for School Boards of Governors. All these are intended to maintain quality of education in Uganda. On the other hand, NCHE is mandated to register all institutions of higher education in the country; and ensure the minimum standards for courses and programs of study and equating of degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded by different public and private institutions of higher education (Apolot, Otaala, Kamanyire, & Komakech, 2018). In order to further strengthen the education system, the government of Uganda through her donors brought on board key interventions in order to improve access and provision of quality education. The most recent interventions include the establishment of teacher management information systems (TMIS), harmonization of teacher training programmes and continuous professional development, including integration of ICT in teacher pedagogical skills training by all teacher training institutions (Komakech & Osuu, 2014). In 2017, Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) developed a benchmark for all bachelor of education programmes in East Africa. IUCEA is mandated to maintain high and comparable academic standards in higher education recognised regionally and internationally; put special emphasis on the promotion of Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Management (IUCEA, 2017). However, reports from stakeholders

indicate that teachers who graduate from various teacher training institutions in Uganda demonstrate low professional competence. Performance of novice teacher has been declining over years due to unpaid attention on the importance on novice teacher support and guidance on effective teaching learning practice. Reports from Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) indicates that most novice teachers lack effective competence to effectively plan, teach and assess lessons (Apolot et al., 2018; Komakech & Osuu, 2014; Malunda, Onen, Musaaazi., 2016). Komakech and Osuu, (2014) noted that there is very minimal difference between trained and untrained teachers when it comes to lesson preparation and classroom practice, and yet teacher trainees are required to undergo rigorous training including school practice. School practice which is referred to as teaching practice or practicum in different contexts is a learning process through which teacher trainees are exposed to school environment during their internship (Kagoda, 2011). Marais and Meier (2008) looked at school practice as a range of experiences student teachers are exposed to when they are engaged in classroom and school activities. According to NCHE and IUCEA, school practice is compulsory for all students offering education programmes at any teacher training institutions. Thus, there is need to examine the influence of school practice experience in enhancing student teachers' pedagogical practices.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Teacher training is believed to enhance student teachers with the required knowledge, skills and attitudes to be competent professionals. Apolot et al., (2018) notes that teacher training equips the graduates with necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge to be effective in their classrooms. However, most stakeholders blame the teacher training institutions for not fully preparing teacher trainees with required competence to match the demands of the 21st century (Apolot et al., 2018; Komakech & Osuu, 2014; Malunda et al., 2016). There is a public outcry that the majority of teachers who graduate from colleges and universities lack practical skills, professional ethics, content and methodology to apply in classroom teaching.

Novice teachers complete their teacher training colleges but demonstrate inadequate knowledge of learners and their development, subject matter; principles and functions of teaching including teaching diverse learners, classroom management and assessment in the teaching learning environment (UNEB, 2014; UNESCO, 2014). ICT knowledge and skills are even more wanting especially in this era of globalisation. Many scholars have attempted to understand the cause of poor teacher performance which in turn affects the entire quality of education in Uganda. For example Malunda, Onen and Musaaazi (2016), investigated the relationship between instructional supervision and teacher pedagogical practices; Komakech and Osuu, (2014) examined the impact and challenges in the implementation Uganda SESEMAT Programme; Apolot et al. (2018), examined the influence of school practice supervision and its influence on student academic performance in higher education of learning, and (Kagoda, 2011), studied the influence of the schools learning environment on the performance of teacher trainees on school practice. Much as all these studies are related to the current study, the studies did not directly examine the influence of school practice supervision on student teachers' professional practices in West Nile region. Thus, the current study examined the

effectiveness of school practice in improving student teachers' pedagogical practices in West Nile, Uganda.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of school practice in improving student teachers' pedagogical practices in West Nile, Uganda

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:-

- i) examine the effectiveness of school practice supervision in improving student teachers' planning and preparation skills
- ii) establish the effectiveness of school practice supervision in improving student teachers' presentation and delivery skills
- iii) determine the effectiveness of school practice supervision in improving student teachers' self-evaluation skills

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions guided the study: -

1. How effective is school practice in improving student teachers' planning and preparation skills?
2. To what extent does school practice supervision improve student teachers' presentation and delivery skills?
3. To what extent does school practice supervision improve student teachers' self-evaluation skills?

1.5 Scope of the study

The study was conducted among student teachers of Muni University who were involved in eight weeks of school practice in the academic year 2019/2020. Forty-six-year three student teachers were posted for school practice in thirteen secondary schools in Arua city, in the districts of Arua, Maracha, Terego and Koboko in North western Uganda. The study investigated the influence of school practice supervision on student teacher's lesson planning and preparation; lesson delivery, and teacher's self-evaluation skills.

2. METHODOLOGY

Convergent parallel mixed method design was adopted from Creswell (2012), to assess student teachers' pedagogical practices during school practice among Muni University third year student teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, merged, and the results used to understand the research problem. The rationale for using both quantitative and qualitative methods was that one data collection form supplies strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other

forms. Secondly this design was preferred because data would be collected at once and thus, cheaper in terms of time and resources, and yet, provided a deeper understanding of research problem.

The study was conducted in Muni University, which is the sixth public University located in North Western Uganda. This was because it is one of the universities offering teacher education programmes in both secondary and primary education. Secondly, the quality of education is dependent on quality service delivery offered by the universities. Thus, in case of any dissatisfaction with the quality of graduates, the training institution would be on the top blame list. The study purposively sampled and collected data from 58 research participants, that is, all the school practice supervisors (n=12) and student teachers (n=46). This was because expertise opinions were obtained from only knowledgeable participants. All the year three student teachers doing bachelor of science with education were selected to participate in the study. This was because these were on their final school practice and would provide a basis to assess their pedagogical practices. Secondly, it was important to allow the final year education students reflect on their professional progress right from when they joined the university for teacher training, and the support they received from school practice supervision that shaped their current practice.

Quantitative approach involved the use of observation method made by school practice supervisors as described by Creswell (2009; 2012), in which first-hand information were gathered using various data collection instruments like Lesson assessment form and camera, by observing actual behaviours of research participants in natural settings at a research site. Lesson assessment form focused on student teachers' pedagogical practices on lesson presentation and delivery; classroom management lesson assessment and teacher self-evaluation, which are all quantified.

Qualitative data were also collected using document analysis in which systematic review or evaluation of both printed and electronic materials were done (Bowen, 2009; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). This method enabled data to be evaluated in order to gain understanding on the level of student teachers' preparedness in terms of school practice professional documents such as schemes of work and lesson plans. Documents analysed were basically teaching and general information files. Teaching files contained schemes of work, lesson plans, attendance register, learner assessment records, teaching time table and record of work covered. Basic information file contained information on school profile, rules and regulations, and teacher professional code of conduct. Data from observation and document analysis were coded and quantified into means, percentages and later represented using bar graphs.

Another set of qualitative data was collected using focused group discussion so as to gain an in-depth understanding of the study subject, this was in form of debriefing meeting with the year three students. After school practice exercise, a debriefing meeting was convened attended by both student teachers and supervisors. During the meeting, student teachers were given opportunity to reflect on their experience in the course of school practice. The reflection was basically on student teachers' reporting for school practice, interaction with the school community, support from supervisors and challenges

faced during school practice. Some of the student teachers' reflections were captured verbatim. Similarly, each student teacher was mandated to write and submit a report to the school practice office. These written reports were scrutinized and key themes extracted to back up the quantitative data. Key phrases were also identified to reinforce the verbatim quotes during debriefing meeting, as presented in discussion section of this study.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focused on examining the effectiveness of school practice in improving student teacher's pedagogical practices. Therefore, the analysis of data presented in this section was grounded on the information provided by the participants of this study. The response rate was 100% since all the student teachers submitted their school practice reports and all the supervisors submitted their school practice assessment forms.

3.1 Gender of participants

Table 1: Showing gender of participants

Respondents	Male	Female	Total
Supervisors	10	02	12
Student teachers	39	07	46
Total	49	09	58

Table 1 above revealed that out of the total number of participants, majority (84.5%) were male while only (15.5%) were female. This showed that Muni University is not doing well in terms of gender balance. This seems to be the case with most educational institutions including universities in Uganda (Apolot et al., 2018). This signals insufficient women empowerment and thus, there is need to encourage women to embrace teaching profession, so as to role model female students at all levels.

3.2 Assessment of student teacher's level of preparation and planning

Teaching is a process that takes place in three phases namely pre-active, interactive and post-active phases (Shekhawat, 2014). During the pre-active stage, preparation and planning constitute a very important stage of teaching. Lesson preparation and planning involves making lesson plans from drawn scheme of work. At this stage, a student teacher also prepares appropriate and suitable teaching-learning materials to support instructional process. The findings are presented and discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

3.2.1 Assessing student teacher's preparation of scheme of work

School practice supervisors were asked to assess and rate student teacher's skills in the preparation of scheme of work. The components of scheme of work (SOW) assessed includes required format, appropriateness, relevance, systematic, updated, completeness, detailed and creativity exhibited in the preparation of scheme of work. The ratings are presented in figure 1 below

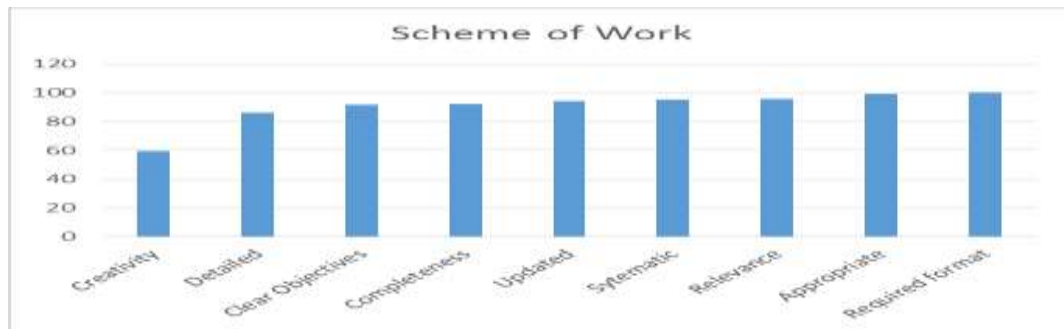


Figure 1. Assessment of student teacher's scheme of work

Results in figure 1 above showed that generally, student teachers prepared their scheme of work well. According to the supervisors' assessment at the end of school practice, 100% of the student teachers were able to prepare appropriate schemes of work, using the required format adopted by Ministry of Education and Sports. About 95% of the student teachers had relevant and systematically drawn SOW. Data also revealed that 90% of the student teachers had updated and complete scheme of work with clear objectives stated. About 85% of the student teachers had detailed scheme of work, and the least performed was creativity, which was still above average (60%). During the school practice debriefing meeting, the student teachers acknowledged the importance of positively engaging with supervisors during the pre-observation conference. One student teacher had this to say: "supervisors guided us during pre-observation meeting. They showed us how to draw the scheme of work. The relationship between scheme of work with the syllabus and lesson plan, how to choose methods.... I have benefited a lot. I am not the same and promised to continue scheming even after here" (Meeting, 12th February 2021). This is in line with Apolot et al. (2018) findings that school practice is an opportunity that help the supervisor to collaborate with student teachers to plan for their lessons in order to improve instructions. Mapolisa and Tshabalala, (2016) quoted a student saying "My supervisor was supportive, friendly, willing to give valuable advice, creative ideas and share their professional skills" (p.20). From the above experiences, it can be concluded that for teaching to be meaningful, there should be a concerted effort by both the supervisor (mentor) and the teacher (mentee) to accept and embrace each other's strength and weaknesses in order to grow in the profession.

However, only 60% of the student teachers exhibited creativity in preparing the scheme of work. This is because some student teachers take school practice lightly and this affects their creativity. Apolot et al. (2018), confirmed this in their study on school practice supervision and student teacher performance in higher institution of learning in Uganda. They found out that some most ?? student teachers were reluctant to fully concentrate on school practice activities claiming they were not yet full teachers. Relatedly, Marais and Meier (2008), found out that some student teachers are reluctant when it comes to teaching practice, claiming that there is too much workload during school practice compared to other learning sessions. Student teachers are encouraged to be creative during school practice because it helps them to view and solve problems more openly and with innovation, which in the long run

makes teaching enjoyable due to emotional development. Marais and Meier (2008), advised that in teaching, improvisation, creativeness and imagination are critical for integrated presentations of content.

3.2.2 Assessing student teacher’s lesson planning

It is the responsibility of every teacher to prepare a lesson plan for all lessons they intend to teach. To abide by these guidelines by the Uganda ministry of education and sports, student teachers are directed to prepare lesson plans for all their lessons. During supervision of final year school practice, supervisors were asked to rate whether the topic, methods, learning aids, content and lesson objectives in the lesson plan matches with those in the scheme of work. The assessment criteria also involved the depth of the lesson, correct rationale stated, and the adequacy of both teacher and learner activities. The data collected are as graphically summarised hereafter.

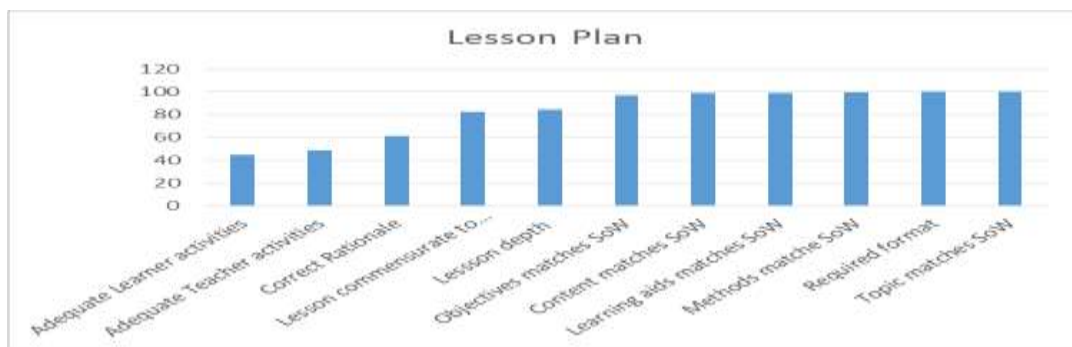


Figure 2. Assessment of student teacher’s lesson plan

According to the quantitative data from supervisors, 100% of student teachers had lesson plans prepared that matched the scheme of work, required format and with teaching methods that matched with those in the scheme of work. Similarly, 100% of student teachers had lesson plans with methods and learning aids that matched with what is reflected on scheme of work. Supervisors in their assessment rated 98% of the student teachers had content and lesson objectives matching the scheme of work. Data revealed that 95% of the student teachers prepared their lesson plans according to the content of the scheme of work.

Lesson plan is crucial in the teaching process in that it helps the teacher to choose the suitable content, diverse teaching methods, appropriate teaching/learning aids and the objectives of the lesson. From the above data, most student teachers took lesson preparation seriously and professionally. This is reflected in their end of school practice reports. A student teacher stated in the lesson learnt section of the report that: *I had good experience during school practice. I was able to perfect my lesson preparation skills. I now have positive attitudes towards lesson preparation (student report, No.05).* Another student added: *I believe the rest of the students must have the same feelings that we benefited*

from the supervisor-supervisee relationships. Our lecturers were able to show us good skills of preparing a lesson. This is in line with the expression by South African student teachers that their school practice supervisors had given them exposure to the teaching profession, which experience books could not provide (Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2016). In the same vein, Apolot et al. (2018) study revealed that, respondents agreed to the fact that school practice enabled trainees gain teaching experience in lesson planning and preparation.

On the contrary, only 50% of the student teachers did prepare adequate teacher activities while barely 40% had adequate learner activities. In the process of instruction, many activities take place to facilitate teaching/learning. These include teacher-student activities and student-student activities. Some students in their school practice report indicated that they had challenges planning and implementing instructional activities. Challenges such as large class size, inadequate instructional resources and time constraints were cited. *“I could not plan many learner activities because there was limited time (Student report, No 01). “...my class was large...this affected planning of learner activities and even some I had planned could not be implemented...” (Student report, No 20). “planning and implementing activities require resources..... we were given very few materials to use and yet the schools could not give us more resources... (Student report, No 35). This finding resonates with Otaala, Maani, and Bakaira, (2013) findings that large class sizes were challenges cited by student teachers as major cause of their ineffectiveness. It is advised that student teachers should be given adequate resources during school practice. However, student teacher should as well improvise materials that are lacking so as to implement their various instructional activities, this requires creativity.*

3.2.3 Assessment of student teacher’s record keeping skills

Record keeping plays a significant role during school practice. Student teachers are required to keep all records relating to learners’ attendance, assessment records, record of work covered and inventory of resources under their custody during school practice. In this study, the focus was on assessing the effectiveness of student teacher’s record keeping in terms of easily navigable files (Teaching and general information files); whether the files contained all the required professional documents and the neatness of the files. The assessment was also based on whether the files were up-to-date and exhibited continuity. The supervisors’ assessment is presented in the table below.

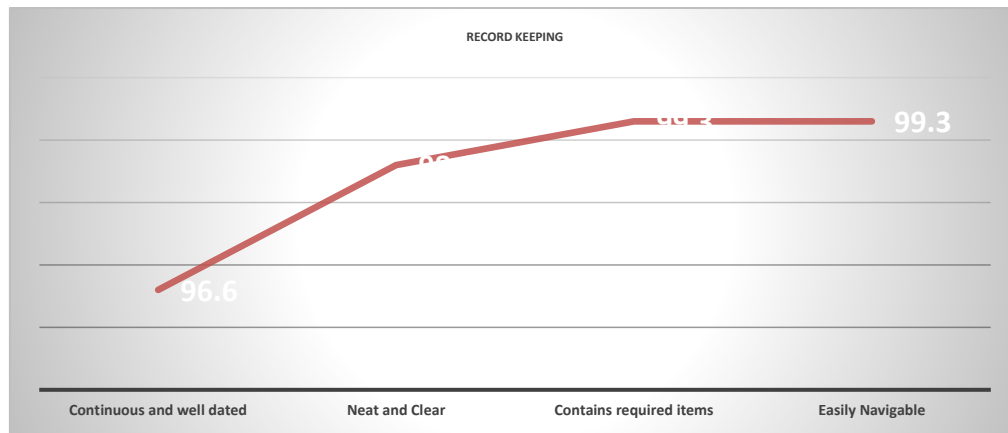


Figure 3. Assessment of student teacher's record keeping skills

One of the pedagogical practices that student teachers demonstrate during school practice is record keeping. School practice supervisors rated 99.3% of student teacher had files which were easily navigable and contained required professional items; 98.6% had neat and clear files while 96.6% continuous and well dated files. Each student teacher is mandated to have two well-arranged and labelled school practice files. The teaching file which contains personal information, school time table, class registers, lesson plans, scheme of work, lesson plans, record of marks and work covered. The second file is the general information file that contains personal information, curriculum vitae, school profile, school map, teachers' code of conduct Muni university school practice policy. The qualitative data collected from debriefing meeting and student teacher's report corroborate this information that high level of record keeping exhibited by the final year student teachers as a result of continuous support by supervisors. One student teacher had this to say during the meeting: *"I am happy to report that we benefited from this school practice. My skill in record keeping and file management generally was poor at the beginning of the school practice but now I am going out happy that I can prepare and organise very neat files"* (Meeting, 12th February 2021). Another student had this in her report *"... I have learnt how to organise and manage my school practice file. Good record of learner attendance helped me to follow the absentees' performance and guide them accordingly. I promise to take this up even after here, during teaching..."* (Student report, No 10). This means that the supervisors and the school authorities supported these student teachers during school practice. This resonates with Mapolisa and Tshabalala, (2016) findings that the student teachers were motivated to teach and enjoy the teaching profession because of the support rendered to them by not only their supervisors but the principal and other school staff. Thus, support given to student teachers is vital in nurturing professionalism in the teachers right from their pre-service training.

3.2.4 Assessment of student teacher's selection of instructional materials

Instructional materials have been acknowledged by several scholars in enhancing students' learning since many abstract concepts, in any course or subject, can be represented using illustrations, pictures or models (Marais & Meier, 2008). In this study, assessment of the effectiveness of school practice in developing skill of selection of instructional materials included the relevance of the instructional

material to cause learning, appropriateness and the creativity exhibited in the selection and development of the instructional materials, as presented in figure 4 below.

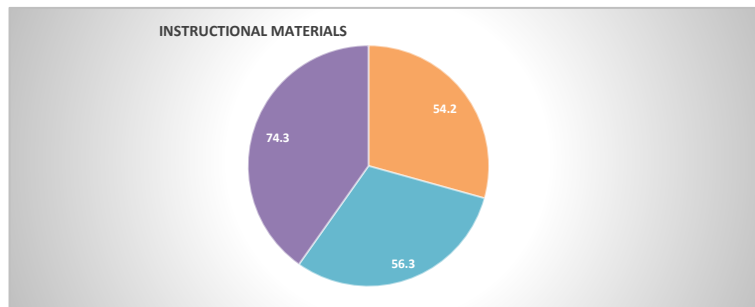


Figure 4. Assessment of student teacher’s selection of instructional materials

On the selection of instructional materials, supervisors reported that 74.3% of the student teachers had relevant instructional materials; 56.3% had appropriate instructional materials while 54.2% exhibited creativity in the selection of the instructional materials to be used during teaching. Selection of instructional materials is vital in causing learning. However, data from quantitative and qualitative data all revealed that selection of instructional materials suffered ineffectiveness. Three challenges had been expressed by the student teachers; first, the student teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of resources provided to them by the university. Secondly, the schools could not avail the student teachers with the required specimens and realia. The third challenge was the student’s inability to improvise some of the necessary instructional materials. These verbatim quotes attest to that. “... *I faced the challenge of inadequate materials. The university only gave us scheme and lesson plan books, five pieces of manila and a box of marker pens. This was not enough as we were expected to have charts in every lesson, we teach.....*” (Student report, No 21). “*my supervisor told me to improvise, but there are certain things you cannot improvise. You need the real thing*” reported one of the student teachers (Student report, No 40). This findings dovetails with literature by Otaala et al., (2013) who observed that inadequate instructional materials impact negatively on teachers’ teaching methods and generally quality of teaching.

3.3.1 Student teachers’ Assessment on Presentation and Delivery of content

The second phase of teaching is the interactive. During this phase, the teacher interacts extensively with the learners. The key areas for assessment here include lesson introduction, lesson development, learner involvement and motivation. The assessment included voice projection, correctness of the content, use of instructional materials, guidance on note taking and lesson conclusion. The quantitative data is represented in the figure below.

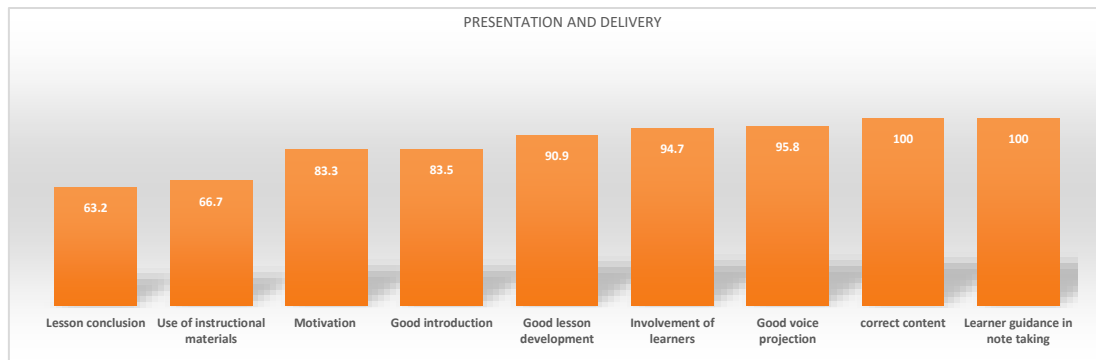


Figure 5. Assessment of student teacher's Presentation and Delivery

Lesson presentation and delivery was one of the key pedagogical practices that was assessed by the supervisors during school practice. Data collected revealed that 100% of the student teachers guided students on note taking and had correct content delivered to the learners; 95.8% had good voice projection; 94.7 had full involvement of learners while 90.9% had good lesson development. The findings revealed that the student teachers were supported and thus school practice was effective in enhancing aspects under lesson presentation and delivery of student teachers. Qualitative data also confirm these findings as reflected in the following quotes from the participants. During the debriefing meeting, a student had this to say: *"I took the comments from supervisors positively. They appear at first to be harsh but it was a learning point. I was able to adjust my voice and follow my lesson plan (Meeting, 12th February 2021).* Another one added: *"I was taken through how to write the rationale by my supervisor and it made my subsequent lessons enjoyable. The learners appreciated my lessons because they knew why they were learning the content (Meeting, 12th February 2021).* The study findings is in line with the findings of Apolot et al., (2018) that school practice supervision improves student teachers' subject competence; improves their confidence in teaching and learning using new teaching techniques. Similarly, Marais and Meier, (2008) noted that many school practice supervisors were supportive, friendly, willing to give valuable advice, creative ideas and tips, and share their professional skills with student teacher during school practice.

However, data revealed that only 66.7% and 54.2% of student teachers had appropriate use of instructional materials and lesson conclusion respectively. Data from student teacher's reports also confirm that they had challenges with use of instructional materials and lesson conclusion. *"..... I had challenge with instructional materials. The class was large and the charts and realia that I brought could not be manipulated by all the learners..." (Student report, No 46).* Inadequate use of instructional materials as evident in the findings inhibit learners to attain required skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for application in relevant situations. And yet Ajoke (2017), advised teachers to use instructional materials in all their lessons because they enable both the teachers and learners to participate actively and effectively in lesson sessions. This therefore gives room for the acquisition of skills and knowledge and the enhancement of self- confidence and self- actualization.

3.3.2 Assessment of student teacher's classroom management practice during school practice

Classroom management helps to maintain an orderly environment so that learners can engage in meaningful academic environment (Chandra, 2017). During school practice, classroom management practice was one of the dimensions assessed. Areas of focus were classroom organization, attention to learner individual needs and time management, as shown in the figure below.

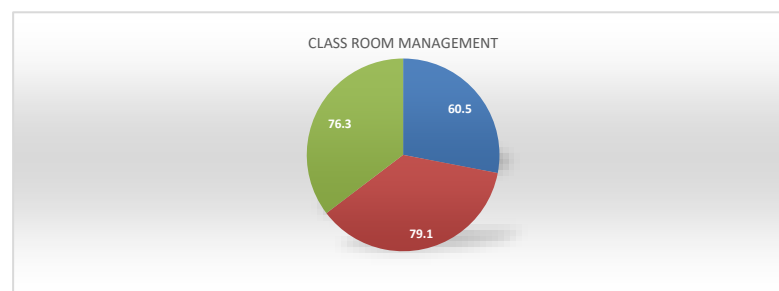


Figure 6. Assessment of student teacher's Class Room Management

On classroom management skills, data revealed that 79.1% of the student teachers took care of individual learner needs during their lessons, while 76.3% had good classroom organization. The above quantitative data revealed that most student teachers had developed classroom management skills at the end of their final school practice. During interactions with the student teachers in the debriefing meeting and from their school practice reports, it was clear that student teachers' classroom management skills had improved. The following verbatim concurs with the quantitative data. *"I learnt my students within the first two weeks of school practice. I knew how they behaved so it helped me to handle them during my lessons (Meeting, 12th February 2021). "I have learnt that a well organised classroom yields productive lesson. Secondly, I also learnt how to handle students with different abilities for example, the introverts and the extroverts.... (Student report, No 16).* However, only 60.5% of the student teachers kept time. Much as this is above average, it signals that either these student teachers were not fully supported by the supervisor and school authorities or it was largely a laxity on their part. Previous researches attest to the fact that classroom management pose challenge to beginning teachers and therefore recommend closer support from supervisors and school authorities (Apolot et al., 2018; Odundo, Othuon, & Lillian, 2017; Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011).

3.4 Assessment of student teacher's lesson evaluation during school practice

Lesson evaluation forms one of the key components of teacher reflective practice. Reflecting on one's lesson at the end gives a teacher opportunity to improve on the lesson by identifying areas where students need more help, and thus, becomes an efficient and effective teacher. Towards the end of school practice, supervisors were asked to assess student teachers' lesson evaluation skills. The assessment was based on the following areas. What went well in this lesson? Why? What problems did you experience? Why? Was it "student centered"? Should it have been? What could you have done differently? What did I learn from this experience that will help me in the future? The following

quantitative data depicts how student teachers performed during their final school practice in as far as lesson evaluation was concerned.



Figure 7. Assessment of student teacher's lesson evaluation

As presented in the table above, school practice supervisors rated 90.5% of the student teachers as having up to date record of learners' marks while 84% of the student teachers had objective self-evaluation remarks. Nevertheless, 71.7% of the student teachers gave timely class exercises. The above results showed that student teachers performed well in lesson evaluation. When student teachers were asked to share their thoughts during the debriefing meeting and through their reports, it came vividly that reflecting on their previous lessons helped them to improve each time. One student wrote; *"reflecting on my lessons was an eye opener. I learnt from objective self- evaluation. My supervisors always asked me how I felt about the lesson I taught, and how different I would conduct the next lesson in future (Student report, No 06)*. Previous research on reflective practice confirms that personal reflection is the best method of capability building among teachers (Gutierrez, 2015). This means that if teachers receive ample professional development support during pre-service training, they develop confidence at the initial stage of their training and thus, will positively impact on their later professional practice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigated the effectiveness of school practice supervision in improving student teachers' pedagogical practices in West Nile region, Uganda. From the findings of the study, it is concluded that a well conducted school practice supervision enhances student teacher preparation and planning competence. Secondly, when student teachers are supported by both supervisors and school authorities, they are likely to improve their knowledge and skills of presenting their content, classroom management and assessment of learning. Finally, the study concludes that school practice supervisors motivate student teachers to objectively reflect on their previous lessons so as to identify areas for improvement in the subsequent lessons. On the other hand, the study also concludes that student

teachers who were not fully supported by either the supervisors or the school authorities showed low level of competence in lesson preparation, delivery and assessment of the teaching/learning process. In light of the preceding conclusion, the following are recommended.

- i. Student teachers should go for school practice with an open mindset and with the motivation to learn from colleagues, learners, supervisors and school administrators.
- ii. Adequate school practice materials should be availed to student teachers to enable them deliver appropriate content to the learners during school practice.
- iii. Student teachers should exhibit high level of creativity and innovativeness during school practice to avoid over reliance on the universities and schools for all the required instructional materials.
- iv. Supervisors should treat school practice as a non-judgemental exercise tailored towards the professional growth of student teachers. Supervisors should exhibit warmth and supportive attitudes towards student teachers so that they can love and enjoy the teaching profession from the very beginning of their career.
- v. The school authorities, including established teachers should provide a conducive and supportive environment. When a school is treated as a learning community, student teachers will have the motivation to learn in a collegial manner.
- vi. The universities should adequately prepare the student teachers prior to their school practice to gain familiarity and deepens their understanding in the whole exercise, this gives them the confidence to execute the tasks National Council for Higher Education should enforce strict adherence to the quality assurance standards on the organization and management of school practice by all higher institutions of learning for improved quality of education.

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