

# Is teaching practice for grading or improvement? Examining student teachers' perception and experience at the University of Dar es salaam, Tanzania

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## ABSTRACT

Teaching practice is the central activity in testing teaching skills gathered in classroom learning and in preparing professional teachers in any country. The current study investigated student teachers perception and experience on the teaching practice supervisor's treatment, student supervisor pre or post classroom discussion and teaching practice processes in general. The data to inform the study were collected from 112 student teachers: 67 were males and 45 females and the tools used were questionnaires both structured and non-structured. Of these 52 were second years while 60 were third years. Majority of respondents about 95 (84.8%) were pre service and 17 (15.2%) were in-service. The findings revealed that student teachers had positive perception on teaching practice exercise, teaching practice supervisor's treatment, and supervisor-student feedback provision style. It was also discovered that demographic variables such as: sex, year of study and professional background had a slight influence on student teachers perception on teaching practice exercise, supervisors treatment, and supervisor-student feedback styles. In line to that 42 (37.5%) student-teachers acknowledged the concept that teaching practice is for improvement and the remaining percentages were given to factors associated to opposite dimension. It was therefore concluded that, there is a need for strengthening the teaching practice supervision exercise and specifically the collaboration between university teaching practice office and the teaching practice-host institutions should be improved so as to minimize the challenges emanating from miscommunication during the teaching practice exercise.

**Keywords:** Teaching practice, supervision, perception, feedback, assessment.

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## INTRODUCTION

In all professionals field, training is a crucial aspect with an attempt of testing and assessing the skills attained by learners before the actual consumption in the world of work. This fact stand as vital to the teaching profession where teacher-trainees need to attend field training for the purpose of assessing their teaching skills and testing the theories learned in classrooms in actual school context. This field exercise which is responsible to orient teacher-trainees in their learning process in colleges and universities is called teaching practice. Scholars such as Kirbulut et al. (2012), Al- Mahrooqi (2011), Ngidi and Sibiya (2003) in Kiggundu (2007) emphasize that teaching practice course provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers to apply the theoretical learning offered

by university teaching programs in the real life of school settings.

### The concept of teaching

According to Reed et al. (1998), teaching is an exercising process of helping students to discover new sounds with which they can communicate. It involves creating an environment in which students can safely suspend the absoluteness of their everyday realities to enter a world which previous learned rules do not apply and everything has a new name. At the core of teaching is the sense of bringing to the students what they need to know to

advance their self-examination, to that end a teacher brings written and visual materials together to provide both background content and central problem for the students and learners in the class to understand. Therefore, the facts emphasized here add value in the need for orienting teacher trainees in the practical exercise (teaching practice) so as to give them authority and confidence in their process of helping students to discover the intended and new facts.

In this sense, the teaching activity can be viewed as an art and sometimes a science. As a science activity, it needs to engage and orient teachers with skills of improvisation, motivation and pacing activities based on student's behaviour, intuitive process and evaluation techniques. On the other hand, teachers are required to have abilities in organization of materials, assertive discipline, classroom management, integration of all aspects of teaching, make clear objectives, focus on objectives and improvise methods, encourages students to exceed state of competency goals and possess authority to plan in classrooms (Drouin, 1996 in Reed et al., 1998). Hence, the need for teacher-trainees to acquire the said competences demand an approach which can help to assess the degree at which these skills are attained during pre-service teacher preparation the fact which call for effective teaching practice exercise.

### **Need for teaching practice among teacher-trainees**

Teaching practice is the name that denotes the preparation of student teachers for teaching by practical training (Nwanekezi et al., 2011; Al-Mahrooqi, 2011; Kiggundu, 2007). Pre-service practical training has been established in many teacher education colleges and universities with teacher education courses both locally and internationally (Albasheer et al., 2008). For instance, preparing effective teachers for school systems require that those teachers are competent in content, theoretical and practical aspects. Nwanekezi et al. (2011) add that during teaching practice, student teachers feel engaged, challenged and even empowered. The exercise represent the range of experiences to which student teachers are exposed when they work in the classroom and school (Marais and Meier, 2004; in Kiggundu, 2007). In fact the need for teaching practice originates from the concept called "Learning to teach". Elliot (1993) insists that learning to teach is a matter of learning the technical skills which enable individuals to function effectively in the education system.

Effective teaching requires knowledge and understanding of the subject the student teacher is going to teach, and learning the curriculum. Teaching students implies exposing the individuals to knowledge and skills as well as practical experience as a basis for professional learning. Training a teacher is collaboration between academic and practitioners in the field. People learn how

to teach from watching and imitating others. They learn from experience and reflection (Stuart et al., 2009; Karthogen et al., 2006; Tailor et al., 1997). Teachers also learn through practice, acquiring knowledge and reflection on their experience (Elliot, 1993; Tailor et al., 1997). Learning about teaching is also enhanced through student teachers doing research on their own practice the facts which are facilitated by teaching practice exercise. In line to that, Kagoda (2011) adds that teacher trainees have the potential to become good and empowered teachers if they are given the opportunity to do peer teaching and made to develop their own teaching aids. The provided evidence highlights the need for providing much time and flexibility so as to give time to student teachers and teacher trainees to exercise and improvise the learned teaching skill in the real and actual working environment.

### **Teaching practice as assessment**

Assessment is the term typically used to describe the activities undertaken by a teacher or in this context an assessor to obtain information about the knowledge, skills and attitudes of students or trainees. This activity can involve the collection of formal assessment data that is the use of objective tests or the use of informal data by involving observation checklists. The assessor typically assigns a grade or mark for work undertaken by students or trainees (Marsh, 2009). Considering the emphasis pointed out here, it is true to the fact that teaching practice exercise is an assessment process where by teacher-trainees are graded and rank their rate of improvements as they grow in their training journey. Teaching practice employ all the rules and regulations of assessment so as to make sure that the skills attained by learners in the field are recorded and ranked clearly. According to Chase (1999), the main reasons for assessment in teaching practice as in other areas of educational tasks includes diagnosis of learning and monitoring process, grading students, predicting future achievements, motivating students and diagnosis of teaching process.

These assessment motives can be met through intensive discussion between the supervisor and student teacher. The discussion is guided by questions, answers and explanations which help the teacher-trainees to understand his or her weaknesses and areas for future improvement. In grading students, sufficient evidence needs to be collected by the teacher or supervisor to enable the person assign accurate grades. It should be noted also that the corrections and feedback provided should be evident and informative so as to help students towards improvement in their teaching.

In line to that, assessment is useful means in predicting students' or teacher-trainees' eligibility for selection in future courses. This calls for need for making this

exercise effective so as to give individuals chances for improvement and growing in various educational and non-educational assignments. The more varied the assessment used, the more informed the supervisor or teacher will be to give grades to students. Further, McInnis and Devlin (2002) note that any assessment must communicate to the participant how to make instruction more effective; this is because assessment is an integral and prominent component of the entire teaching and learning process. Generally, teaching practice exercise is also geared towards accomplishing need for understanding teacher-trainees achievements and informs the areas of improvement for further rectification.

### **The problem and its context**

Teaching practice forms a fundamental part of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) education related degree programmes. It is designed to prepare students for maximum practical and professional development training in the field of education (UDSM Prospectus, 2007/8-2009/2010). The practice occupies a key position in the programme of teacher education as it provides professional skills as well as experience about the environment to which the student teacher is prepared for (Nwanekezi et al., 2011; Kennedy, 1999). It is a provision that students pursuing Bachelor of Educational, Bachelor of Arts and Science with Education degrees are required to participate in teaching practice exercise and pass for them to graduate as professional teachers. It is emphasized however that the success of teaching practice must be seen in its educative function. The student teachers must ultimately develop the required professional skills and shape their personalities and attitudes. This can only be achieved through active and friendly cooperation between the student teachers, the university, the ministry of education and vocational training and all those bodies in this country involved in teaching practice and in education in general (UDSM teaching practice regulation and procedures, 2008). The practice may include understanding students' behaviour, planning and delivering lessons, classroom organization and management, developing and using teaching media and making evaluation of their lessons. Waghorn and Stevens (1996) in Kiggundu (2007) noted that, sometimes student teachers fail to integrate theory and practice hence; they place theory on one side and practice on the other. Additionally, Martinez (2004) in Kiggundu (2007) observed that sometimes student teachers get overwhelmed by theoretical modules but get difficult in planning their lessons and presenting them in the classroom. Majority of students get difficult in classroom management and organization, classroom control, student- teacher interaction, selection and effective use of teaching methods, useful and timely use

of teaching materials and confidence.

These challenges have caused some countries to place more weight on teaching by adding time, or changing from block teaching practice to internship. For instance, in Finland teaching practice constitute one third (33%) of the teacher education curriculum (Sahalberg, 2010). Increasing time for teaching practice in teacher education curriculum is expected to enhance teaching skills and support the argument that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers (Nwanekezi et al., 2011). Analytically, in other countries like Tanzania University of Dar es Salaam teaching practice constitute almost (6.6%) of the teacher education programme. To improve the quality of student teaching and developing positive attitudes towards teaching profession and foster instructional competence of teachers in training, teacher education programs should arrange for their candidates to gain teaching experience at elementary or middle schools for a minimum of one semester (Liu, 2012). Adequate practical teacher training in the actual school setting helps student teachers to integrate theories of the professional at first hand the applicability in their school settings (Dreyer, 1998 in Quick and Siebörger, 2005).

### **Teaching practice at UDSM**

Teaching practice at the University of Dar es Salaam is organized at the end of second semester each year for first year and second year student pursuing Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Science with education and Bachelor of Arts with education. The exercise is organized jointly between the School of Education and Faculties of Education at the constituent Education colleges: Dar es Salaam University College of Education and Mkwawa University College of Education. The teaching practice is organized for eight weeks of which student teachers are exposed to actual school situation. Before posting student teachers for actual teaching practice prospective supervisors are sent into the field for pre visits. The aim of a pre-visit is mainly to establish an educational and supportive relationship with various schools and teacher college management to find-out the exact number of vacancies available in the particular institutions, subject specialization and the availability of accommodation in the educational institution. Students are sent to teaching practice stations after completing their second semester examinations. Subsequent to two weeks of settling-in, teaching assessment begins by institutional, internal and external supervisors.

The institutional assessment is conducted by teachers/officials of the host institution where the student teachers are doing the practice. These managers or teachers are also supposed to provide support on daily basis through advice, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning activities (Komba and Nkumbi, 2008). The internal assessment is done by

university lecturers who have background in education. Lecturer's background in education is very crucial as Sahlberg (2010) commented supervising teachers have to prove that they are competent to work with student teachers. The external assessment is done mainly by supervisors invited from the universities outside the country chiefly for quality assurance and general teaching practice improvement. Both supervisors are expected to assess and provide written and oral feedback to student teachers. During feedback student teachers learn and evaluate themselves through strength and shortcoming highlighted by the supervisor. Later on, suggestions are made on how to improve teaching with reference to seven broad areas (a) lesson plan preparation, (b) teachers communication, (c) mastery of the subject matter, (d) use of teaching resources, (e) classroom organization and management, (f) assessment and evaluation and (g) ethical conduct and integrity.

The present study was triggered by teaching practice experience where the researchers noted that student teachers' perception of their supervisors influenced their performance during classroom assessment. Additionally, when researchers were marking student teachers teaching practice report for 2011/2012 they noted that students had mixed experiences and concerns. In their reports one student wrote "*my supervisor was so harsh her comments discouraged me to continue with teaching profession*". Other researchers have also commented that supervisor - supervisee relationship have had a great influence on student teachers orientation, disposition, conception, practice and overall professional development (Farrell et al., 2000; Quick and Sieborger, 2005 in Kiggundu, 2007).

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate student teachers' perception and concern of teaching practice exercise taking place at the University of Dar es Salaam. Specifically, the study sought to analyze student teachers perception towards teaching practice as an exercise for grading or improvement; assess student teachers' perception towards teaching practice supervisor treatment and examine student teachers perception towards student-supervisor comments during discussion after classroom assessment.

### **Research questions**

1. Do student teachers perceive teaching practice exercise as a tool for grading or improving their ability to teach?
2. What are student teachers' perceptions towards teaching practice supervisors treatment during teaching practice supervision?
3. What are student teachers perceptions of supervisors'

comments during student-supervisor discussion after classroom assessment?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study area and design**

The study was carried out at Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE), a constituent college of the University of Dar es Salaam. The area was selected purposively as it is the working station of the researchers that made easy for data collection. Student teachers from DUCE were used to capture information of students' perception on teaching practice and supervisors in a sense that during teaching practice students assigned to a school and assessed randomly by supervisors from school of Education and faculties of Education at DUCE and MUCE respectively. Descriptive survey design was employed to investigate student teachers perception toward three variables highlighted in the objectives of the study. Descriptive studies are concerned with behavioural attributes like opinions held, processes and effects (Best and Kahn, 2006; Mugenda, 2008).

### **Participants of the study**

Participants of the study comprised of 112 second and third year student teachers who conducted their 2010/2011 academic year teaching practice in 23 regions of Tanzania mainland involving 99 secondary schools and 5 teacher colleges. These respondents were randomly sampled including 52 (46.4%) second year and 60 (53.6%) third year student teachers. Among these, 45 (40.2%) were females and 67 (59.8%) were males. Majority, 95 (84.8%) were posted to government stations and only 17 (15.5%) were posted to private institutions. Analytically, about 100 (89.3%) participants were teaching arts subjects whereas and 12 (10.7%) teaching science subjects. Of all the participants, 95 (84.8%) were pre-service, and 17 (15.2%) were in service student teachers. The study was conducted at the beginning of the semester and academic year 2012/2013 therefore, first year students were excluded as they have yet to participate in teaching practice.

### **Instruments and procedures**

The data to inform this study were collected using a questionnaire of 45 items with both open and closed ended questions. Part one of the questionnaire comprised of nine closed ended items regarding demographic characteristics of respondents. Part two had ten items that asked participants about their perception towards supervisors. Part three had twelve items that inquired respondent's perception toward student-supervisor while part four had eight items which about respondents' perception of the teaching practice in general. Other than parts 1, 2 and 3 were arranged in a five of Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. Some of the items in the scale were negatively worded to prevent response bias. The open ended questions generally required respondents' to provide a range of responses sometimes not anticipated by the researcher and using respondent's own words based on the objectives of the study.

The instrument was administered in the first week when students were collecting their teaching practice report after eight weeks of teaching practice. The researchers thought it was an optimal time to administer the questionnaire as student teachers should be able to remember a number of experiences which transpired during their eight weeks of teaching practice forty hours per week. The questionnaires were distributed to participants who agreed to

**Table 1.** Student teachers' perception of teaching practice.

Statement	F	%
The way teaching practice is conducted by students and supervisors is more for grading	11	9.8
Some supervisors do provide the grade to students which do not reflect their work	4	3.6
Some students are given few periods to practice teaching	6	5.4
Some supervisors comments do not help students to improve	4	3.6
Students teaching preparation start after the arrival of the supervisor	27	24.1
Teaching practice is for improvement	42	37.5
Time is short and timetable interference are common	3	2.7
Because in most cases students leave teaching practice just after assessment	15	13.4
Total	112	100.0

\* F= Frequency; % = Percentage

participate by the researchers themselves and they were retrieved on the spot to ensure high rate of return (Nwanekezi et al., 2011; Best and Kahn, 2006).

### Reliability

The instrument reliability was evaluated using the Cronbach's Alpha method. The scale reached the minimum acceptance value for Cronbach's alpha .70 (Gardener, 2001 in Ahamad and Sahak, 2009; Pallant, 2005; Nunnally, 1978 in Pallant 2005). Part one had Cronbach's alpha of .78, Part two had .70, and part three had fewer (less than ten) items, hence mean inter item correlation for the items was calculated and the value was 0.3 above the recommended minimum value of 0.2 (Briggs and Cheeks, 1986 in Pallant, 2005).

### Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science version 16.0 was used for data analysis. The data were coded then frequencies and percentages were computed. High percentage indicated positive perception towards the supervisors, students-supervisor discussion and teaching practice in general. Additionally, t-test was computed to compare perception difference between male and female, second year and third year and pre-service and in-service. Before computing the mean score and t-test, all negatively worded statements were reversed accordingly. On the open ended part of the questionnaire, respondents opinions were coded into categories and results were listed according to the responses given.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The student teachers' perception toward teaching practice can be influenced by factors such as finance, geographical distance, accommodation, uneven posting of student teachers, supervisors, and the institutional environment. The first objective of the study sought to analyze participants' perception and experiences of how teaching practice is currently revealing itself as an exercise for either grading or improvement.

The results indicated that 87 (77.7%) viewed teaching practice as mainly being for improvement and not grading. Conversely, 30 (26%) respondents agreed that

teaching practice is for grading and not improvement. Several reasons were provided by the respondents: 27 (24.1%) opined that teaching preparation is effective only after the arrival of the supervisors; 15 (13.4%) had the opinion that student teachers leave teaching practice just after assessment; and 11 (9.8%) had reason that reported that way teaching practice is conducted and time for it is limited (Table 1).

On the other hand, 90 (80.4%) respondents believed that teaching practice is very important because a person cannot be a good teacher without practicing teaching. Furthermore, 91 (81.2%) disagreed with the statement that teaching practice is very frustrating; if possible they could avoid it. When student teachers were asked on what they learned from teaching practice 97 (86.6%) indicated that they learned a number of issues such as classroom management, lesson plan preparation and putting theory into practice. About 85 (75.9%) indicated teaching practice was fairly done and they liked it. Another question required students' opinion on whether the current block teaching practice should be changed into internship 73 (65.1%) agreed with the statement. Arguably, for student teachers to agree with the statement has two implications one student teachers perceived the current block teaching practice conducted for eight weeks is not enough practical experience and second some may think that internship will provide them more money for personal use.

Based on the findings (Table 2), independent samples t-test was computed to compare mean score of males and females, second and third year, and pre-service and in service student teachers. The results indicated the overall mean for respondents perception toward teaching practice was ( $M = 25.8$ ,  $SD = 3.4$ ). The mean score for males was ( $M = 25.7$ ,  $SD = 3.2$ ); smaller than that of females ( $M = 26$ ,  $SD = 3.6$ ) also smaller than the overall mean. The results suggest that female students had more positive perception during teaching practice exercise than male students. However, the difference between the two groups showed .64 (2 tailed test) indicating no perceptual difference between the male and

**Table 2.** Students teachers' perception of teaching practice.

Statements	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
I learned a lot from teaching practice professional teacher	97	86.6	8	7.1	7	6.3
A person can be a good teacher without teaching practice	15	13.4	7	6.2	90	80.4
Teaching practice is very frustrating if possible I could avoid it	13	11.6	8	7.1	91	81.2
In reality teaching practice assessment is fairly done and I like it	85	75.9	13	11.6	14	12.5
I enjoyed teaching practice a lot I but time was too short	83	74.1	14	12.5	15	13.3
Teaching practice should be changed to internship like other profession	73	65.1	17	15.2	22	19.6

\* F= Frequency, % = Percentage

**Table 3.** Students' suggestions about how to improve teaching practice.

Statements	F	%
Increase number of supervisors to meet students' demand	10	8.9
Student posted in a school should be proportional to the number of vacancies available	9	8.0
Increase time for teaching practice	36	32.1
The college and host institutions should be strict to make sure irresponsible students fulfil their responsibilities	10	8.9
Avoid contradiction among supervisors in terms of comments and guidance	9	8.0
There should be prior practice before going to the field	7	6.2
Provide more teaching practice tools and accommodation	12	10.7
Time for assessment should be full as indicated in timetable 40 or 80 minutes	7	6.2
College calendar should correlate with secondary school Calendar to avoid contradictions	6	5.4
Increase number of assessment	6	5.4
Total	112	100.0

\* F = Frequency, % = Percentage

female student teachers. This finding is contrary to that of the Organizations for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) (2009) which uncovered those female teachers demonstrated greater professionalism and motivation even if the difference between the two groups was quite small but significant and relatively consistent across nations.

Respondents perception of teaching practice exercise based on the year of study indicated that second year students had a slight lower positive perception ( $M = 25.6$ ,  $SD = 2.9$ ) than third year ( $M = 26$ ,  $SD = 3.8$ ). This result suggests that student teachers perception differed based on the year of study whereby, third year students' perceived teaching practice more positively compared to their in second year. When the magnitude of difference was computed, the results indicated that there was no statistical significance difference between second year and third year students .53 (2 tailed test). This results could be attributed to reason that, all second and third year students share almost similar experience and some student were more familiar with the teaching practice, had established more social networks and knew most of the matters related to teaching practice exercise.

Similarly, it was predicted that, professional background could influence students' perception towards

the teaching practice exercise. In this aspect respondents were grouped into fresh from school (pre-service) and up graders (in service). The results revealed that the mean score for pre service group was ( $M = 25.9$ ,  $SD = 3.5$ ) slightly higher than that of in service students ( $M = 25.2$ ,  $SD = 2.6$ ). The difference in perception between pre-service and in service could be explained by the argument that, upon entering a teacher education program, pre-service teachers hold some beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and concerns about teaching based on their previous experiences (Kirbulut et al., 2012; Cole and Knowles, 1993; Robson, 1991). In the open ended part, the questionnaire asked respondents to give their view of how teaching practice helped them in become professional teachers. The majority 61 (54.5%) had opinion that supervisors feedback play a great role on student teachers professional development. Respondents opined that the supervisor's feedback helped them improve their teaching. However, some few 2 (1.8%) indicated that they were discouraged by the comments from supervisors. Based on respondents' experiences on teaching practice, they had concern regarding the ways in which teaching practice could be improved.

The highlight results from Table 3 indicate that 36



**Table 4.** T-test comparing mean differences for sex, year of study and professional background on perception towards supervisors.

Category	Mean	Std	Mean difference	df	t-test	Sig. level
Male	41.47	7.2	-278	110	-223	.31
Female	41.75	5.3				
Second year	41.59	6.5	.01	110	.01	.89
Third year	41.58	6.5				
Pre-service	41.72	5.8	.83	110	.49	.15
In-service	40.88	9.4				

(32.2%) of student teachers had the opinion that time for teaching practice needed to be increased probably to internship which will provide more time for practice. The idea of increasing time for teaching practice was also revealed on the other statement where about 73 (65.1%) agreed that the current block teaching practice should be changed to internship. The findings on limited time for teaching practice above are similar to that by Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) in their study student teachers also indicated time allocated teaching practice was very limited. Similarly, the findings are in line with those by Quick and Siebörger (2005) in which majority of respondents both supervisors and students felt time for teaching practice was not enough and students wished to spend more time in schools. Additionally, 12 (10.7%) opined that students should be provided with teaching practice tools and accommodation, and 10 (8.9%) suggested that the number of supervisors should be increased to fulfil the large number of students.

For the purpose of making teaching practice more serious respondents commented that college and host institutions should be strict to make some irresponsible students carry out their responsibilities. These results indicate that student teachers had a mixture of experiences and concerns about teaching practice which can be associated with experiences encountered in the school settings.

### Student teachers perception of teaching practice supervisors

The second objective of the study sought to find out student teachers' perception towards teaching practice supervisors treatment. The findings indicated that majority of supervisors who participated in the teaching practice supervision in 2011/2012 were perceived positively by student teachers. For instance, 60 (53.6%) of respondents indicated they were not threatened by any attribute of the supervisor while 52 (46.43%) reported they were threatened by some characteristics of the supervisor mainly by: 19 (16.9%), indicated education level, 15 (13.4%) how they knew their supervisors before,

11 (9.8%), strangeness of the supervisor, and age 5 (4.5%). Furthermore, 2 (1.8%) respondents reported being threatened by supervisor's gender.

To understand student teachers perception of teaching practice supervisors, frequencies and percentages were computed. The results indicated that 102 (91.1%) respondents agreed that supervisors intended to help them improve their teaching, 99 (88.6%) agreed that supervisors were dedicated and committed to work, and 97 (86.6%) agreed that supervisors were very friendly and supportive during teaching practice assessment. Conversely, 85 (75.9%) respondents disagreed with the statement that "our supervisors invaded us (went in the teaching practice station without notice) and left just after classroom assessment". This implies that supervisors provided prior information before actual visit and spent time for discussion with student teachers after classroom assessment. Furthermore, an independent sample t-test was computed to find out whether there was a significant difference in perception based on the three demographic variables: sex, year of study and professional background (Table 4).

Based on gender, the results indicated the score for males ( $M = 41.5$ ,  $SD = 7.2$ ) and female ( $M = 41.8$ ,  $SD = 5.3$ ). When the differences between males and females were compared, the results showed a significant level of .31 (2 tailed test) suggesting that there was no significant difference in perception score between them. Likewise, the mean for student teachers perception based on the year of study was computed, the results indicated second year ( $M = 41.6$ ,  $SD = 6.5$ ) and third year ( $M = 41.6$ ,  $SD = 6.5$ ). The average mean score for the two groups was 41.6 meaning that both second and third year student teachers had the same perception of their supervisors' treatment mean was .9 (2 tailed test).

Regarding students teachers professional background the results from t-test indicated pre-service ( $M = 41.6$ ,  $SD = 5.8$ ) in service ( $M = 40.9$ ,  $SD = 9.4$ ) and an independent sample t-test .83 (2 tailed test) indicating no perception difference between pre service and in service students teachers towards their supervisors treatment during teaching practice assessment. These results could be attributed to the fact that these student teachers go

**Table 5.** The aspects which student teachers liked from their supervisors.

Statement	Frequency	Percent
The way the interacted with students	35	31.2
Staying in the class all the time and providing feedback	9	8.0
I liked the way the supervisors advised me	41	36.6
Seriousness when conducting their duties	10	8.9
The way he showed me on how to plan the lesson	10	8.9
The comments I was given were very effective	7	6.2
Total	112	100.0

\* F = Frequency, % = Percentage

through the comparable curriculum, and supervisors are using similar standard during teaching practice assessment. These findings are different from those of the study by Albasheer et al. (2008) who found that male and female student teachers had similar perceptions regarding the effectiveness of university supervisors, school principals and co-operating teachers participating in the teacher education program offered by the Hashemite University in Jordan.

The results from Table 5 indicate that 41 (36.6%) of respondents liked the way supervisors advised them in all aspects of classroom teaching (lesson plan and scheme of work preparation, use of teaching aids and classroom management and supervision), 35 (31.2%) liked the way supervisors interacted with them suggesting it was professional and helpful to them and 10 (8.9%) opined that supervisors were seriousness during teaching practice assessment. These findings are consistent with those observed by Albasheer et al. (2008) in which student teachers believed that university supervisors trained them effectively to plan comprehensive daily lesson plans, combine a theoretical perspective with practice in the instructional process, provide appropriate instructions to improve performance, provide immediate feedback at the end of each class, and conduct meetings to discuss student teachers' performance and progress individually and collectively. Other studies have shown that student teachers value a supportive, interactive classroom environment especially with respect to the process of learning to teach (McNally and Inglis, 1997 in Kiggundu, 2007).

### **Student teachers' perception of comments after classroom assessments**

During teaching practice exercise supervisors are supposed to provide educative and informative comments on student teachers work. These comments will guide student teachers in the proceeding teaching exercise. The comments are provided in oral or written form during consultation that take place between one student and supervisor or a group of students before

and/or after classroom assessment. Prior classroom assessment student-supervisor discussion is very important as it orients student teachers on basic issues of interest to supervisors. Thereafter, student classroom assessment is done followed by a discussion which is mainly reflective with the intention of highlighting student strength and weaknesses during lesson presentation. The third objective of the study sought to examine respondents' perception and concerns of supervisor comments provided during discussion before and/or after classroom assessment. Regarding the discussion itself, 98 (84.5%) of respondents indicated that student-supervisors discussions were very useful and they liked them. 95 (84.8%) had opinion that, supervisors should find time to discuss the strength and weakness observed during classroom teaching.

Majority 109 (97.3%) of respondents indicated that they had discussion with supervisors before and/or after classroom assessment. Time for discussion varied and ranged between 3 and 30 min. This variation is influenced by a number of factors some of these include: number of student teachers in the school or college, school calendar, total number of student teachers per supervisor and supervisors' level of education. However, 3 (2.7%) reported that they had no discussion with supervisors before and/or after classroom assessments implying that supervisors departed just after classroom assessment and therefore students are expected to learn from the comments written on the assessment paper provided. These findings are consistent with the findings by Christie et al. (2004) in Kirbulut et al. (2012) who found that pre-service teachers in Scotland could not receive any constructive feedback from their supervisors related to their teaching practice instead they were just told that their teaching was fine, even if it was not. Moreover, supervisors did not allocate enough time for giving feedback: they gave feedback during limited periods, such as at the end of the lesson or during break times.

Apart from the respondents' perception of the students-supervisor discussion they had also varied perception on the comments (feedback) provided by supervisors as indicated in Table 2.



**Table 6.** Students experience and perception towards students-supervisor discussion.

Statement	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
The comments were understandable and there were no need of discussion with supervisor	40	35.8	7	6.2	65	58
Supervisors comments were educative and helped me	90	80.4	7	6.2	15	13.4
The comments were very useful and helped be a lot	92	82.1	8	7.1	11	10.7
I learned nothing from supervisors written comments	27	24.1	9	8.2	76	67.9
The comments were self explanatory and very useful	76	67.8	11	9.8	25	22.3
The comments were effective and improved my teaching	94	83.9	7	6.2	11	9.8

\* F = Frequency, % = Percentage

**Table 7.** T-test comparing mean differences for sex, year of study and professional background on perception towards supervisors.

Category	Mean	Std	Mean difference	df	t-test	Sig. level
Male	43.8	7.1	.35	110	.78	.35
Female	43.5	5.7				
Second Year	43.7	7.4	.09	110	.94	.313
Third Year	43.6	5.6				
Pre-service	43.8	6.1	.73	110	.67	.36
In-service	43.1	8.9				

The findings from Table 6 indicate that 94 (83.9%) student teachers agreed that supervisors comments were effective and helped them improved their teaching, 92 (82%) agreed that the comments were very useful, and 90 (80.4%) agreed that supervisors comments were educative and helped them. Additionally, an independent sample t-test was computed to find out whether respondents' differed in perception bases on the demographic variables like sex, year of study and professional background (Table 7).

The results showed that the mean score for the total scale was ( $M = 43.7$ ,  $SD = 6.5$ ) and majority 66 (58.9) of respondents scored above the mean indicating that they had positive perception towards supervisors comments discussion while some 46 (41.1%) scored below the mean indicating that they had negative perception towards supervisors' comments. Based on gender, male student teachers showed a slight higher positive perception ( $M = 43.8$ ,  $SD = 7.1$ ) than female ( $M = 43.5$ ,  $SD = 5.7$ ) and the significance for the two groups was .78 (2 tailed test) indicating both males and females had almost similar perception of students teachers comments. Regarding the year of study, second year had a minor higher positive score around the mean ( $M = 43.7$ ,  $SD = 7.4$ ) than third year ( $M = 43.6$ ,  $SD = 5.7$ ) and the significant level for the two groups was .93 (2 tailed test) also indicating no perceptual difference between the two groups. Concerning professional background, the results

indicated that pre-service student had a slightly higher mean score ( $M = 43.7$ ,  $SD = 6.1$ ) and in-service student ( $M = 43.1$ ,  $SD = 8.9$ ) with the significant level of .67 (2 tailed test) this indicated that no difference in perception between the two groups.

This finding was attributed to two basic factors first the majority of supervisors are essentially professional teachers and therefore, they knew their work and second, the pre supervision seminars on which supervisors remind each other of the professional standards and ethical issues regarding teaching practice. The findings are similar to that of Duquette (1994) who found that supervising teachers commented one of their roles as explaining to the students what is happening in the classroom. They also provided reasons on why, to teach and model professional behaviours and ensure that the student is aware of duties and responsibilities of the profession. Also, the study found that, at the beginning of each of the two week sessions much time was spent with the student explaining routines, planning lessons, and providing feedback. In addition, in the open ended part of the questionnaire respondents were asked to provide opinion on the ways through which students-supervisor discussion could be improved the results as summarised in Table 6.

The results in Table 8 indicate that majority 75 (66.9%) of students had the opinion that time for student-supervisor discussion should be increased, 18 (16.1%)

**Table 8.** Student concerns on how to improve student-supervisor discussion.

Statement	F	%
Supervisors should use friendly and polite and language	18	16.1
should be fair and encourage rather than discourage students some were harsh	11	9.8
The government should provide more money to supervisors	3	2.7
Increase number of supervisors	5	4.5
Supervisor should increase time for discussion with students	75	66.9
Total	112	100.0

\* F= Frequency, % = Percentage

suggested that during teaching practice supervision, supervisors should use polite and use friendly language during student-supervisor discussion, and 11 (9.8%) commented that supervisors should be fair and encourage students rather than discouraging students. This result could be attributed to varied nature of supervisors' personalities and level of education as people vary on the way they advise student teachers in the process of nurturing professional behaviour. Literature reveal that, some supervisors are strict and that student teachers have to follow how their supervisor tell them to teach instead of experimenting with new teaching strategies (LaBoskey and Richert, 2002 in Kirbulut et al., 2012; Beck and Kosnik, 2000).

Similarly, the study by Kiggundu (2007) revealed that some student teachers expressed negative experiences with their supervisors during teaching practice supervision. The study also observed that some supervisors assume that students are already equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills required to teach and therefore are reluctant to assist them with the development of basic skills. Inadequacy in supervisor guidance and training may results in ineffective use of practical teaching (Ismal et al., 2000 in Kiggundu, 2007) can also lead to negative experience of teaching practice (Marais and Meir, 2004 in Kiggundu, 2007). Liu (2012) commented that, lack of self reflection and evaluation of teaching can significantly affect quality of student teaching when candidates miss an opportunity to learn from others and understand what works or does not work in teaching. The argument was also supported by other scholars that feedback from university supervisors is an aspect identified for improvement (Zhu and Zhang, 2010 in Liu, 2012; Wu, 2007). Effective oral and written feedback from supervisors increases the level of trust among students and makes them work with their supervisors as a team in stead of a boss-subordinate or superior- inferior relationship (Richardson-Koehler, 1988 in Duquette, 1994).

## Conclusion

Student teachers need to be educated and understand that teaching practice is meant for their own professional

development and therefore, they should make use of that the chance effectively. On the other hand, teaching practice supervisors need to be more supportive, directing and encouraging student teachers for their professional development. Some few supervisors who were perceived as harsh should understand that the supervisors' role is to nurture and develop supportive cordial relationship with the student teachers. The university-school communication should be strengthened so as to minimize a number of problems resulting from miscommunication between the two institutions.

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