

An Assessment of the Extent to Which Teaching Environment Enhances Quality Teaching To the Student- Teachers during Teaching Practice

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ABSTRACT

All teachers aim at providing effective teaching leading to effective student learning. This is influenced by a teaching environment in which teaching and learning can take place and where the teacher can be effective. The student- teachers when on teaching practice, put the knowledge and skills they learned, (when on training) into practical teaching environment. An effective teaching environment must provide a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning in a classroom situation. By so doing, teaching time is increased and learning time is used to the maximum and then behavior problem in the classroom is minimized. The study aimed at assessing to what extent teaching environment enhances quality teaching to the student-teachers during teaching practice with special reference to Thogoto Teachers Training College in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design. From a population of 342 respondents, a sample of 30% from each group was taken using stratified random sampling technique which gave each item in the population an equal probability chance of being selected and participate in the study. A semi-structured questionnaire was used for primary data collection. To ascertain the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot survey was conducted. The study found that the quality of education is directly related to the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. The research established that when student-teachers learn to take responsibility, gain confidence and improve their classroom management skills, an effective teaching environment is achieved leading to improved quality teaching.

Keywords: Teaching Practice, Student-Teachers, Teaching Environment, Quality teaching, PI Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Teaching environment refer to the classroom atmosphere that facilitates teaching and learning thus leading to pupils' academic success. There is need for the student-teacher to know how to establish effective teaching environment, for this is important to student-teachers, regular teachers, educational planners, learners and the governments. Teaching environment which is conducive for teaching and learning influences the teachers and the learners. The teacher will teach effectively and the learners will understand and grasp what is being taught. When the student-teachers establish teaching environment with all the required physical facilities, well arranged classrooms, they acquire positive attitude towards teaching. He/She is in a position to impart knowledge effectively and confidently in a way of achieving quality teaching. By so doing, the learner benefits to the maximum and the student-teacher comes out as a successful professional teacher.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Thogoto Teachers Training College provides sufficient exposure of the student-teachers to all that is needed in teaching practice, specifically the skills of establishing effective teaching environment that facilitate quality teaching. As observed, the student-teachers lack creativity

and innovativeness when establishing teaching environment in the classrooms they handle during teaching practice. The teaching/learning aids are either lacking or poorly prepared. The physical facilities like the chairs and desks are not arranged well and some are broken and not in use posing insecurity to the pupils. Some classrooms are dark due to insufficient lighting, window panes are broken exposing the pupils to the cold especially during the rainy season. This kind of teaching environment affects the teaching as well as the learning. The student-teachers are surrounded by fear because of the awful state of the classrooms which affect their confidence thus making them to have negative attitude to teaching which now spill to their quality of teaching and professionalism both in the College and nationally. This situation posed a problem because the student-teachers fail to understand how to handle their teaching in such classrooms, for an effective teaching environment is an important element in enhancing quality teaching among student-teachers during teaching practice.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study assessed to what extent teaching environment enhances quality teaching to student-teachers during teaching practice. Specifically, the study described a teaching environment that promotes quality teaching. Secondly, the study established the importance of teaching environment in enhancing quality teaching. Lastly, the study found out the challenges the student-teachers face in preparing and handling positive teaching environment.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1) To examine the teaching environment that enhances quality teaching to the student-teachers during teaching practice with special reference to Thogoto Teachers Training College in Kenya
- 2) To establish to what extent teaching environment enhance quality teaching to the student-teachers during teaching practice with special reference to Thogoto Teachers Training College in Kenya
- 3) To find out the challenges the student-teachers face in preparing and handling positive teaching environment to enhance quality teaching with special reference to Thogoto Teachers Training College in Kenya

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What teaching environment enhances quality teaching to the student-teachers during teaching practice with special reference to Thogoto Teachers Training College in Kenya?
- 2) To what extent does teaching environment enhance quality teaching to the student-teachers during teaching practice with special reference to Thogoto Teachers Training College in Kenya?
- 3) What are the challenges the student-teachers face in preparing and handling positive teaching environment to enhance quality teaching with special reference to Thogoto Teachers Training College in Kenya?

SIGNIFICANCE/ JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The results of the study provided a framework for focusing on the teaching environment by the student-teachers when on teaching practice as a foundation for quality teaching. This benefitted various stakeholders. The researchers learned the importance of teaching environment in enhancing quality teaching during teaching practice. The research process

also benefitted on the knowledge provided by the design and instruments when collecting and analyzing data. The findings of the study benefitted the scholars who now understand and regard teaching environment seriously to provide teaching the best quality leading to the education development both nationally and internationally.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching environment in enhancing quality teaching

Teaching environment provides an atmosphere where effective teaching and learning process is based. Codruta, Simona & Georgeta (2011) suggests that learning relate to teaching, when all educational issues are implemented at the lowest level and so teacher's attitude highly influence the teaching environment. Thatcher and Amant (2011) analyzed" four teacher attitudes:- attachment, concern, indifference and rejection." They concluded that learners are conscious of their teacher's feelings towards them and to the teaching activity. The attitude expressed creates a teaching environment which will affect teaching and learning process accordingly. For example if the teacher has a concerned attitude, the teaching will be influenced positively for the teaching environment will be conducive for both teaching and learning. If the attitude shown is of rejecting the learners, thus the teacher showing a lot of anger and hatred, a violent and unpleasant teaching environment is established which affect teaching and learning negatively and no teaching or learning will take place. Therefore, the student-teachers should try to develop positive teaching environment that can lead to quality teaching, by adopting the correct attitude towards the learners and teaching activity.

Butt (2011) suggests that a teacher who manages the classroom well make activities clear in such a way that both the teacher and the learners are aware of what to do. If the learners clearly know what to do, results are produced and finally learning is achieved. Simmona (2010) indicates that a well-organized teacher shows good classroom management skills and disciplines the learners with love, but those who lack those skills are disorganized and deal with their learners with harshness and harassments thus making the classroom unbearable as a teaching environment. Positive classroom teaching environment leads to learning for all learners. Kelz (2009), advocates that a teacher must be very close to the learners by providing learner participatory activities that make the teaching learner-centered. Concerned teachers work hard to recognize the learners and encourage them to think. Such teachers create classroom atmosphere that allow the learners to answer questions and assess themselves as quality teaching is achieved.

Wolf, Milburn & Wilkins (2008) came up with the idea of classroom climate. These researchers concluded that desirable classroom atmospheres lead to positive teaching and learning. When the teacher establishes social- emotional environment by creating interrelationships of teacher-learners and learner-learner, the classroom climate make the learners feel as part and parcel of the class and are happy and safe. A favourable teaching environment is established by people with desirable attitude towards teaching. By so doing, the learners will benefit from quality teaching leading to improved learning process.

Importance of teaching environment in enhancing quality teaching

According to Smith & Addison (2013), a favourable teaching environment helps the teacher to communicate his or her teaching to the learners with confidence, thus achieving quality teaching in a healthy acceptable manner. Wren, Halbesleben & Buckley (2007) acknowledge that a favourable inviting environment in a classroom results into a shared learning space where the learners are involved thus making the environment practical as well as interesting and stimulating, helping the teaching and learning process to develop with joy.

The researchers stated that in a favourable teaching environment, relationships are developed, the teacher, earns authority which is influenced by the way he/she shows respect, knowledge and eagerness for what one teaches. A student- teacher when in a training college is theoretically taken through the art of preparing teaching environment since no teaching or learning can take place if the environment is not conducive. Teaching environment is an important aspect in teaching and learning, for if it is correctly worked on quality teaching is achieved.

Challenges faced by the student-teachers when establishing teaching environment to enhance quality teaching

According to Christensen & Cartile (2009), student-teachers when on teaching practice face many challenges which include creating a teaching environment that bring about desirable learning for all learners. This is because they are expected to keep on changing the classroom teaching environments by involving the learners to increase a sense of ownership of their learning environments. The student-teachers face another challenge of lack or insufficient physical facilities, Chairs, desks are not enough and they are expected to put up with the shortage, thus forced to teach under poor teaching environments affecting quality of teaching negatively.

The student-teachers also lack sufficient knowledge and skills to handle indisciplined learners who turn classrooms as playing grounds thus interfering with the teaching strategies. They are not supposed to threaten or punish, shout or yell at them but they are required to establish classroom control. A favourable atmosphere should be established and not entertain negative classroom teaching environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed method was applied to study the research problem. The researchers using qualitative interview, collected information from the respondents. Quantitative survey method was used to generalize results of the whole population from the sample. Semi-structured questionnaire as a research instrument was applied to collect primary data. This was composed of open-ended and closed-ended questions were administered to the respondents. This instrument was suitable for the mixed design where qualitative and quantitative data was collected.

Mixed data was collected and a mixed data analysis methods were applied. As a statistical rule, the quantitative data was analysed first followed by the qualitative ones. An analytical tool, that is, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version was applied by the researchers in the data analysis. The qualitative data was analysed by another tool, that is, the simple descriptive analysis tool, where the responses of the participants were categorized into classes which were later coded. Descriptions for interpretations and conclusions of the study were summarized in tables and graphs.

RESULTS, FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Student Teachers' extent of agreement with statements relating to the teaching environment that enhance quality teaching

Table 1 tabulates the findings based on the student teachers' extent of agreement with the statements related to teaching environment. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the quality of learning relate to the quality of teaching in classrooms as shown by a mean of 4.1 also the respondents strongly disagreed that their physical working environment was good and facilitated quality of their teaching as shown by a mean of 2.7; also the respondents

disagreed that they were able to keep a reasonable balance between work and personal life as shown by a mean of 2.5. Lastly, the respondents strongly disagreed that they experienced discipline problem and wasted much time solving discipline problems as shown by a mean of 2.0.

Table1. Student teachers’ extent of agreement with statements on teaching environment

<i>Teaching Environment</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
The quality learning relate to the quality of teaching in classrooms.	4	8	13	67	8	4.1	1.01
I experienced discipline problem and wasted much time solving discipline problems.	29	56	4	4	6	2	1.04
My physical working environment was good and facilitated quality of my teaching.	23	0	25	13	40	3.9	0.96
I was able to keep a reasonable balance between work and personal life.	21	35	33	6	4	2.5	1.02

Further, the study asked the student teachers what needed to be improved to make the teaching environment favorable to enhance teaching quality. Majority of the student teachers indicated that the classrooms were small in size to accommodate a big number of students, they suggested that additional classes should be built, also in some schools where there were inadequate reading materials, the students suggested that the administration should take the necessary measures required to make reading materials such as books and teaching materials such as chinks, teachers’ guide books, blackboards, desks and chairs should be provided. Some student teachers suggested that the college should make changes in dressing code and allow them to dress in official outfits rather than uniforms when on teaching practice.

Regular Teachers’ Extent of Agreement with Statements Related to Teaching Environment

Table 2 tabulates the findings based on the regular teachers’ extent of agreement with the statements related to teaching environment. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the quality of learning relate to the quality of teaching in the classroom as shown by a mean of 4.8; also the respondents agreed that there are adequate teaching resources for the student-teachers during teaching practice as shown by a mean of 3.9. Further, the respondents were neutral that the students exhibit a reasonable balance between work and personal life and also that the student-teachers were assigned reasonable workload as shown by mean of 3.3 and 3.0 respectively.

Table 2. Regular teachers’ extent of agreement with statements on teaching environment

<i>Statement</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
The quality of learning relate to the quality of teaching in the classroom.	0	81	0	19	0	4.8	0.32
There are adequate teaching resources for the student-teachers during teaching practice.	29	50	12	5	5	3.9	0.18
The student-teachers are assigned reasonable workload.	17	33	50	0	0	3.0	0.05
The students exhibit a reasonable balance between work and personal life.	14	43	29	14	0	3.3	0.16

DISCUSSION

The study found that the quality of learning relate to the quality teaching in classrooms and this is highly influenced by the teaching environment which sets the atmosphere for the learners to absorb what is being taught. The student-teachers when on teaching practice put into practice the skill of establishing a teaching environment that influences teaching and learning positively. Teaching environment that is well set empowers the student-teacher with confidence, creativity and innovativeness that help the learners to grasp what is being taught.

The study found out that the student-teachers faced challenges in coming up with a proper teaching environment for their teaching activity which negatively affected their quality of teaching. The inability to effectively master a perfect teaching environment results in failure to deliver the curriculum in the way the student-teachers have been trained. As a result, quality teaching is not achieved since much time is wasted dealing with the classroom situations. For example looking for desks and chairs, disciplining the learners and even assembling teaching/learning materials

The study found out that achieving a reasonable teaching environment enhances quality teaching to the student-teachers in classrooms and this was revealed when they faced good working environments that really facilitated quality teaching. The study concluded that teaching environment coupled with the subject mastery during teaching practice enhances quality teaching.

CONCLUSION

The teaching environment allows the student-teachers to teach confidently and effectively in order to make an impact in the lives of learners. The study concluded that the student-teachers' ability to establish a conducive teaching environment enhance quality teaching during teaching practice. Teaching environment to the student-teachers means: a good, well managed classrooms which are well lit, furniture well arranged with maximum safety, forgetting that the teacher's attitude and behavior is equally important to make learning easy for the learners. Teaching environment not only influence teacher's ability to teach, but also the understanding and learning of the learners. If the teacher cannot establish good teaching environment, teaching and learning process will be affected negatively.

The researchers established that student-teachers have a problem of class control and at the same time noted that classroom management is an important factor in quality teaching. Quality teaching demands that the student-teacher is keen of all that takes place in the classroom to achieve quality teaching and that is why teaching environment is essential in teaching and learning process. Lastly, the study concluded that the student-teachers when on teaching practice need good physical working environment to facilitate quality teaching. When the classroom is under perfect management by the teacher, a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning is realized and quality teaching achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) The study recommended that the physical working environment should be good to facilitate quality teaching. There should be a healthy student teachers working relationship with their peers, supervisor and learners. Codruta, Simona & Georgeta (2011) suggests that the quality of learning relate to the quality of teaching in the classroom.

- b) Further, the study recommends that to enhance quality teaching during teaching practice student-teachers should make sure that they teach in a conducive teaching environment in order to deal with any problem that may arise from the learners.
- c) The skill of establishing teaching environments should be continuously practiced for no teaching or learning can take place .So the Ministry of Education should avail the classrooms with essential teaching equipments in all public schools to improve quality of teaching.

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