

Towards Context – Based Learning as a Model for Pre – Service Primary Teacher Education in Kenya: A Case of Meru and Egoji Teachers Colleges

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Abstract

Research evidence points out that there is a strong relationship between teaching and learning. The KESSP 2005-2010 document and the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 have cited low quality teacher education as a problem in Kenya. They attribute this to the traditional content-based pedagogical primary teacher education model which presents a fragmented view of learning and is not context-based leading to little or no connection between theory and practice. Though efforts have been made in terms of reviewing the primary teacher education curriculum among others, not much has been done in reviewing the traditional model of training. This study sought to establish whether context-based learning through focus discussion group on teaching and classroom practice improves pre-service teachers' teaching effectiveness. It identified experiences and perceptions of pre-service teachers on focus discussion group as a model of context-based learning and formulated a suitable primary teacher training model for Kenya. Five null hypotheses were formulated and tested. A Quasi-Experimental research design in a form of a pre-test/posttest longitudinal panel control group was used. It involved a stratified random sample of eighty (80) first year pre-service teachers from Meru and Egoji colleges for the experimental and control groups respectively. The experimental group was subdivided into groups of ten of equal gender proportions through stratified random sampling. They held discussions under the facilitation of the researcher once per week during the 1st and 2nd school-based practice learning sessions. The research instruments used included a classroom observation schedule, a questionnaire, a focus group discussion schedule and a reflective diary which were piloted at Kigari Teachers College. Data obtained from the research instruments were analysed by use of frequencies, percentages, and an independent t-Test. The findings obtained showed that there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups on all the variables under study namely; instructional system planning ($t(78) = 5.327, p < .05$), teacher-student interactions ($t(78) = 2.458, p < .05$), students' motivation ($t(78) = 2.348, p < .05$) and use of instructional resources ($t(78) = 2.807, p < .05$). However, teachers' classroom management and control had a non-significant t-Test value of ($t(78) = 1.143, p < .05$). The study also revealed that pre-service teachers rated focus discussions groups as useful in their professional development and indicated that all the components of the context-based primary teacher education model were operating well. Based on these findings, a context-based pre-service primary teacher education model with four interacting sources of learning was formulated for primary teacher education in Kenya. Recommendations were made to primary teacher education policy makers, curriculum developers, tutors and pre-service teachers to design and implement context-based learning approaches in the training of primary school teachers which would create student-centred lessons, make students responsible for their learning. It will also help students to relate theory to practice, develop higher order thinking and problem-solving skills and contextualize their teaching in primary schools. Further research was recommended in determining the effect of each context-based learning component on preservice teacher effectiveness and establishing tutors teaching practices.

Keywords: Towards Context, Model, Pre – Service Primary Teacher, Education in Kenya, Meru and Egoji Teachers Colleges

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