

Pedagogical Practice and Support of English Language Student Teachers during the Practicum in Kenya

Ong Ondo, Charles Ochieng

Abstract

This study is an analysis of pedagogical practice and support of English language student teachers during a practicum (teaching practice) in Kenya with a view to discerning what they learnt and the issues that influenced such learning. The study was conducted against a background of calls for research that could provide information for reform of teacher education in general and English language teacher education (ELTE) in particular. The practicum is recognised as an important aspect of all professional learning and is part of most teacher education programmes all over the world. Yet, my literature review revealed that very little research exists in this area, more so in ELTE. Of the previous studies on teaching practice (TP), very few are from developing countries and certainly none (that I know of) in Kenya. This was an interpretive qualitative case study involving seventeen participants - six student teachers, six teacher educators and five cooperating teachers. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews, observations and analysis of relevant documents. The findings generally show that the English language student teachers' practice was mainly focused on surviving the practicum and getting the desired grades to enable them graduate successfully. Consequently, though they learnt some procedural pedagogical knowledge, they were not supported to develop pedagogical reasoning, which is supposed to be the main goal of TP. Some of the issues that influenced teacher learning in this manner were: a weak link between coursework at university and practice in schools, the lack of a clear definition of the parameters of practice and inappropriate conceptualization of support. My study contributes to the field of ELTE by qualitatively analyzing the experiences of all the key participants during one TP session and exploring the question of what the student teachers actually learn during their placements, in a more holistic manner than has featured in most previous research on TP in the field. My study also supports some earlier studies that had similar findings on some aspects of TP; for example, that student teacher learning is only effective during the practicum if there is coordination between all the partners on ELTE. I believe the findings of my study are relevant to TP in other subjects in Kenya, and also other Anglophone African countries where the system of the practicum is generally quite similar.

Keywords: pedagogy, English language student teachers, practicum, Kenya

Full text: http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/2156/1/uk_bl_ethos_507649.pdf