

## **Investigating Challenges Facing Student Teachers during Teaching Field Practice in Tanzania**

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### **Abstract**

The teacher needs to be properly educated and trained for professional efficiency. Teaching practice is an integral component of teacher training, it provides student teachers with experience in the actual teaching and learning environment. This study aimed to find out the difficulties facing student teachers during field teaching practice. Data were collected from student teachers from the Sokoine University of Agriculture through the use of questionnaires with a total of ninety respondents and analyzed by using a statistical package for social science (SPSS). Findings indicate that the major difficulties encountered by student teachers during field teaching practice are lack of accommodation, lack of teaching and learning materials and transport problems. Furthermore, the study shows that the relationship between host teachers and student teachers was good. Based on these findings it was recommended that the field teaching practice allowance should be provided on time so that student teachers can be able to find accommodation for their own. Also, the School administration should make sure that they have enough teaching and learning materials to facilitate effective teaching and learning process.

**Keywords:** Field Teaching Practice, Difficulties, Student Teachers, Host Teachers, Relationship and Accommodation

### **Introduction**

Teaching is an activity performed by the teacher whose intention is to bring about learning. According to Nwanekezi et al. (2011) the teacher needs to be properly educated and trained for professional efficiency and inculcated with a positive attitude that will enable him or her to go through the training properly and come out well equipped with knowledge and skills for the responsibilities lying ahead.

Teaching practice is an integral component of teacher training. It provides student teachers with experience in the actual teaching and learning environment. According to Afolabi (1999) field teaching practice makes the student teachers aware of the practical

knowledge of teaching and learning process including lesson plan preparation, presentation, class management, communication skills, evaluation and the required personality of professional teachers. In Tanzania, teacher education programme exists in the various levels of education that are Grade A, Diploma and degree for colleges of education and Universities. All the teachers training institutions are not only imparting theoretical knowledge but also practical knowledge and skills in teaching the different subjects to prospective teachers.

Currently, in Tanzanian Universities, field teaching practice is a compulsory course in the faculties of education which forms part of the prerequisites for graduations. Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) located in Morogoro Municipality is one of the Tanzanian Government Universities where Education programs are carried out. For practical application of theoretical understanding about different teaching methods, SUA student teachers conduct field teaching practice for all three years of their study. The University allocates student teachers to different secondary schools and colleges for field teaching practice. However, field teaching practice is ineffective to some student teachers. This may be due to different difficulties facing student teachers during their field teaching practice. This study aims to investigate the difficulties facing student teachers during field teaching practice in Tanzania.

### **Related Literature**

Several studies have been conducted in this area of study. According to Okobia et al. (2013) and Ekundayo et al. (2014) the major difficulty that student teachers faces during field teaching practice is accommodation especially when they are posted in new places with which they are not familiar. In some cases, poor accommodation is caused by inadequate funds provided by their sponsors. Thus, either student teachers should be posted to schools located near their respective homes or given sufficient allowance for decent accommodation.

Despite the positive experiences during field teaching practice, student teachers experienced difficulties such as placing field teaching practice at the end of the year was inappropriate (Kiggundu et al., 2009). It is therefore recommended that the field teaching practice timetable should be designed in such a way that it does not interfere with key school terms such as during June and October when teachers are preparing students for National examinations. However, in Tanzania timing of field teaching practice at the end of the year is not the case but the University administrations need to make sure that the locations of field teaching practice do not interfere with school events. Moreover, the mid-term vacation of seven to ten days reduces the time meant for field teaching practice. Early preparations and plans before field teaching help to ensure that the field teaching practice is placed at a time that does not interfere with the other school events.

Furthermore, Gujjar et al. (2010) argued that field teaching practice is not taken seriously because manual rules and regulations were not provided to student teachers before going to respective schools for field teaching practice. Moreover, before starting the field teaching practice, orientation was not given to student teachers. Orientations, rules and regulations when given to the student teachers before field teaching practice helps to prepare them mentally for the difficulties coming in their way during field teaching practice. However, measures should be taken against student teachers who seem to violate rules and regulations to be a warning to the rest of the student teachers.

Good cooperation among host teachers and student teachers helps student teachers to acquire more skills, knowledge and experience during field teaching practice. According to Ogonor et al. (2006) the professional support from host teachers to student teachers during field teaching practice was poor. The authors suggested that changes made in university should be given to teachers from schools where student teachers are sent for field teaching practice so that student teachers can be provided with a suitable environment to learn the principles of teaching. However, it is very difficult for the University administration to give information about changes that occur to all schools.

Edith Kiggundu and Samuel Nayimuli (2009) in their study argued that student teachers were not respected by other staff members and often excluded from many school activities. They suggested that at the beginning of the field teaching practice there should be interactive social activities to initiate good relations between the student teachers and host teachers. I argue that the student teachers should also be included in various school activities to facilitate sharing of knowledge, skills and experience.

Lesson note preparation is a teacher's detailed framework description of the course of instruction for one class session. It consists of four major parts namely the introductory part, class details, subject details and lesson development. Azeem (2011) reported that student teachers are not given practical training in different methods of teaching and lesson note preparation before they are sent for field teaching practice. Student teachers should be imparted practical training in using different methods of teaching and trained practically for lesson planning in advance and allowed to use the available facilities. However, this is not the case for SUA student teachers since the University administration provides practical training of different methods of teaching before they are sent for field teaching practice

Teaching materials are the resources a teacher uses to deliver instruction. Student teachers require teaching materials such as books and chalks to facilitate teaching and learning processes. Susan (2003) and Ogumogu et al. (2013) found that lack of instructional materials and failure to acquire teaching materials in schools is one of the difficulties faced by student teachers during field teaching practice. The government should provide adequate instructional materials to secondary schools, to enhance effective field teaching practice to student teachers. Though most of the privately-owned schools in Tanzania have adequate instructional materials thus this is not the difficulty for all secondary schools.

Du Plessis (2020) conducted a study to investigate student teachers' perceptions, experiences and challenges regarding learners centred teaching. The study revealed that although student teachers have a limited understanding of learners centred teaching, student teachers face some challenges in implementing learners centred teaching approaches such as overcrowded classrooms, time constraints and bad learners' discipline. According to Boadu (2014) the major anxieties faced by history student teachers during teaching practice are heavy workload, classroom management and lesson supervision. Foncha, Abongdia and Adu, (2015) assessed the challenges facing student teachers in teaching English subjects in east London and South Africa. The results showed that the major challenges were a lack of integration between theory and practice. Therefore, Foncha et al. (2015) recommended that to have theory and practice integration, multiple pre-service field teaching training should be conducted.

Most of the studies about difficulties facing student teachers during field teaching practice have been conducted in Nigeria, India, Pakistan and South Africa. This shows that there is little information about difficulties facing student teachers during field teaching practice in Tanzania high learning institutions. Therefore, this study aims at finding out the difficulties facing SUA student teachers during field teaching practice. The study is governed by the following specific objectives:

- To identify and explain difficulties facing student teachers before, during and after the field teaching practice.
- To examine the relationships between host teachers and student teachers during field teaching practice.

### **Research Methodology**

The study used a survey approach. It involves the collection of information from a sample of student teachers through their responses to questions. This approach helped to obtain a wide range of views since there was a wide range of participants. Simple random sampling was used to obtain a sample of student teachers from both second year and third year. This method gave each student-teacher an equal chance of being selected. Also, the Stratified sampling technique was applied to both second year and third-year student teachers because they have been already conducted field teaching practice. This technique helped to obtain a representative sample from both second year and third-year student teachers.

In this study, questionnaires were used to collect data. The questionnaire was given to student teachers with a request to answer the questions and return it to the researcher. A questionnaire contained several questions printed in a definite order form. The questionnaire method was cheap in terms of time and money compared to other methods, provides freedom to the respondents, anonymity and uniformity in responses have been

ensured. Moreover, ethics have been considered such as letting the student teachers know the purpose of the study and ensuring voluntary participation.

Validity is the measure of how well an instrument measure what it is supposed to measure. Reliability is the extent to which a procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all conditions (Kothari, 2004). In this study, validity has been checked through pre-testing and the reliability of the research instrument has been checked by both pre-testing and checking correct wording. Before finalizing the questionnaire, it has been pre-tested with the part of a sample of education student teachers. Pre-testing has been conducted before data collection; it helped the researcher to detect any weaknesses in the instrument so that correction can be made before the time of data collection.

In this study, data processing was conducted by examining the collected data and correcting any errors where possible. Data processing included arranging data in groups based on common characteristics, after processing the data then analysis has been done to examine collected data and make conclusions. SPSS was used to analyze data in this study.

## Results and Discussion

### Information of the Respondents

Table 1 below shows the year of study, education qualification and marital status of the respondents. No significant difference was observed in the year of study and the marital status of the respondents. Significance difference ( $p = 0.050$ ) was observed on education qualification whereby 88.9% of the respondents were form six leavers and 11.1% were diploma holders.

Table 1: Education and marital status

Variable	Category	Percentages of respondents (%)			Pearson Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	p-Value
		MALE	FEMALE	Totals		
		(N=48)	(N=42)	(N=90)		
Year of study	Second year	37.5%	52.4%	44.4%	2.009	
	Third year	62.5%	47.6%	55.6%	(df=1)	0.156
Education qualification	Form six	83.3%	95.2%	88.9%	3.214	
	Diploma	16.7%	4.8%	11.1%	(df=1)	0.050
Marital status	Married	12.5%	7.1%	10.0%	0.714	
	Single	87.5%	92.9%	90.0%	(df=1)	0.398

### Difficulties Facing Student Teachers before Field Teaching Practice

Table 2 below summarizes the difficulties encountered by student teachers when finding the field teaching practice station. It shows that 83.3% of the respondents sent a request to the school and 16.7% of the respondents were allocated by the field coordinator. It shows that majority of respondents sent a request to the school while finding the field teaching practice station. In the process of finding the field teaching practice station student teachers face different difficulties such as most of the schools had no teaching practice places, most of the schools had no houses for teachers and rejection of the student teachers especially private schools. The study revealed that the major difficulty identified while finding the field teaching practice is that most of the schools were occupied. These results are in line with the study by Nwanekezi et al. (2011) who observed that one of the difficulties identified was the Rejection of student teachers by schools.

Table 2: Difficulties encountered by respondents when finding field teaching stations

Variable	Category	Percentages of respondents (%)			Pearson	
		MALE (N=48)	FE- MALE (N=42)	Totals (N=90)	Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	p- Value
FTP station availability	Yes	79.2%	81.0%	80.0%	0.045	
	No	20.8%	19.0%	20.0%	(df=1)	0.833
Most schools had no teaching practice places	Yes	35.4%	33.3%	34.4%	0.043	
	No	64.6%	66.7%	65.6%	(df=1)	0.836
Means used to obtain FTP station	Allocated by coordinators	18.8%	16.7%	17.8%	0.067	
	Sent a request to the school	81.2%	83.3%	82.2%	(df=1)	0.796

### Difficulties during Field Teaching Practice

Table 3 below shows the difficulties encountered by student teachers during field teaching practice. It shows that lack of accommodation is the major difficulty encountered by student teachers since it was mentioned by most of the respondents (80.0%). Also,

25.6% of the respondents mentioned lack of teaching and learning materials as difficulty encountered by student teachers during field teaching practice as well as transport problem which was mentioned by 23.3% of the respondents.

Table 3: Difficulties encountered by respondents during field teaching practice

Variable	Category	Percentages of respondents (%)			Pearson Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	p- Value
		MALE (N=48)	FEMALE (N=42)	Totals (N=90)		
Lack accommodation	Yes	81.2%	78.6%	80.0%	0.100	0.751
	No	18.8%	21.4%	20.0%	(df=1)	
Lack of teaching and learning material	Yes	31.2%	19.0%	25.6%	1.753	0.185
	No	68.8%	81.0%	74.4%	(df=1)	
Transport problems	Yes	20.8%	26.2%	23.3%	0.359	0.549
	No	79.2%	73.8%	76.7%	(df=1)	

In this study, the results show that lack of accommodation is the major difficulty facing student teachers during field teaching practice. This is because during field teaching practice majority of student teachers were not given accommodation by school administrations. These findings agree with the studies conducted by Hzekial (2014) and Ogumogu (2013). Hzekial (2014) and Ogumogu (2013) observed that the difficulty which student teachers face mostly during field teaching practice is lack of accommodation. Therefore, this study recommends that field teaching practice allowance should be provided on time to enable student teachers to find accommodation for their own if the school cannot accommodate them.

Also, the study shows that a lack of teaching and learning materials is another challenge that faces student teachers during field teaching practice. Due to this difficulty student teacher fail to apply different teaching approaches they have learnt in the class effectively, this lead to ineffectiveness of the teaching practice. As in this study, Susan (2003) also observed that most schools did not have enough teaching and learning materials to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

Moreover, another difficulty encountered by student teachers during field teaching practice is the transport problem. Due to lack of accommodation in most of the field teaching practice stations, most student teachers stay far from the school and they may spend more than thirty minutes at the bus station waiting for the bus especially in the morning. These results are in line with the results observed by Nwanekezi et al. (2011).

According to Nwanekezi et al. (2011) lack of transport is one of the difficulties facing student teachers during field teaching practice in Nigeria.

### Post Teaching Practice Difficulties

Results in Table 4 below show the difficulties encountered by student teachers during the preparation and submission of the final report. It shows that in the preparation of the report student teachers fail to get important information about the school (18.9%). Also, there was a significant difference in response to lack of electricity ( $p = 0.050$ ).

After field teaching practice student teachers are required to prepare and submit the report. In preparation for the report, the student teachers fail to get important information from the school such as the background of the school. Also, it becomes very hard when the student teachers want to submit their reports because they should travel from where they are to SUA so that they can submit their reports. Therefore, the school administrations should ensure that the important information concerning the school is prepared and stored properly so that it can be used whenever they are needed. Moreover, the submission of the report should be made through emails, to reduce costs for those student teachers who conduct field teaching practice in other regions which are very far.

Table 4: Difficulties encountered by respondents after field teaching practice

Variable	Category	Percentages of respondents (%)			Pearson Chi-square( $\chi^2$ )	$p$ -Value
		MALE ( $N=48$ )	FEMALE ( $N=42$ )	Totals ( $N=90$ )		
Missing of necessary information from the school	Yes	22.9%	14.3%	18.9%	1.089	0.297
	No	77.1%	85.7%	81.1%	(df=1)	
It is costly	Yes	29.2%	21.4%	25.6%	0.705	0.401
	No	70.8%	78.6%	74.4%	(df=1)	
Lack of electricity	Yes	6.2%	0.0%	3.3%	2.716	0.050
	No	93.8%	100.0%	96.7%	(df=1)	

### Relationship between Student Teachers and Host Teachers

Table 5 below shows that 85.4% of the male respondents agreed that the relationship between student teachers and host teachers was good and 31% of the female respondents reported that the relationship was bad, the significant difference ( $p = 0.050$ )



was observed. Also, a significant difference ( $p = 0.001$ ) was observed on the opportunity to ask questions and interaction whereby 71.4% of females reported that there was an opportunity to ask questions and interaction and 62.5% of the males reported that there was no opportunity to ask questions and interaction.

Moreover, a significant difference ( $p = 0.050$ ) was observed in the sharing of experience, 35.7% of the female said that there was sharing of experience and 81.2% of the male reported that there was no sharing of experience. Furthermore, 93.8% of males agreed that there was good communication and 23.8% of the female reported that the communication between host teachers and student teachers was poor. About 85.6% of the respondents agreed that there was communication between student teachers and host teachers, where the significance difference ( $p = 0.018$ ) was observed.

Table 5: Student teachers and host teacher's interaction

Variable	Category	Percentages of respondents (%)			Pearson Chi-square( $\chi^2$ )	$p$ - Value
		MALE ( $N=48$ )	FEMALE ( $N=42$ )	Totals ( $N=90$ )		
Relationship between student teachers and host teachers	Good	85.4%	69.0%	77.8%	3.473	0.050
	Bad	14.6%	31.0%	22.2%	(df=1)	
Opportunity to ask questions and interaction	Yes	37.5%	71.4%	53.3%	10.360	0.001
	No	62.5%	28.6%	46.7%	(df=1)	
Sharing of ex- perience	Yes	18.8%	35.7%	26.7%	3.296	0.050
	No	81.2%	64.3%	73.3%	(df=1)	
Communication between student teachers and host teach- ers	Yes	93.8%	76.2%	85.6%	5.589	0.018
	No	6.2%	23.8%	14.4%	(df=1)	

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study reveals that the major difficulty facing student teachers when finding field teaching practice stations is that most of the schools had no teaching practice places. The study also observed that the major difficulties encountered by student teachers during field teaching practice are lack of accommodation, lack of teaching and learning materials and transport problems. Also, during preparation and submission of the final report student teachers lack the necessary information about the school and some of the places had no

electricity.

Furthermore, the study shows that the relationship between student teachers and host teachers during field teaching practice was good, this is because the student teachers use the same office with the host teachers and had the opportunity to ask questions and interact. Moreover, the study shows that during field teaching practice student teachers are not assigned administrative activities such as supervising sports and games, matron or patron, supervising debate club and class teacher. This is not healthy for student's teachers are expected to assume these roles once they complete their studies.

Based on these findings it was recommended that school administration should prepare accommodation facilities for student teachers and the field teaching practice allowance should be provided on time so that student teachers can be able to find accommodation for their own. Also, the School administration should make sure that they have enough teaching and learning materials to facilitate effective teaching and learning process. Furthermore, student teachers should be assigned administrative activities so to prepare them to become good teachers who can teach well and assume administrative roles as well.

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