

Teachers Perception Towards Effectiveness of Teaching Practice in Improving Student Teachers Teaching Skills in Monduli District, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated teachers' perception towards effectiveness of teaching practices in improving student teachers teaching skills in Monduli District Tanzania. The study used Social change theory developed by Anthony Smith's in 1973. The study adopted a convergent design under the mixed methods. The target population was 691 of public primary school teachers found in Monduli District, Tanzania that covered 63 public primary schools. The sample drawn from the target population was 6 head of schools and 94 public primary school teachers which taken from 6 primary schools through stratified and simple random sampling equivalent to 12.5% (Ogula, 2009). The self-administered questionnaires used for data collection from sampled participants. Additionally, reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha with acceptable scale of 0.78 and data was analyzed using means, frequencies, and percentages and presented in table form with the aid of Statistic Package of Social Science Version 25. The qualitative data were summarized, coded, analyzed and presented in narration form according to the themes generated from research question. The findings of study revealed that, majority of teachers had positive perception towards teaching practice in improving teaching skills, which concluded that teaching practice is essential to student teachers in equipped with sufficient teaching skills like in harmonize theory and practice, learning life skills around community and also practice communication skills that enabled in development of teaching competence in their profession. Also, minority of teachers had negative perception on teaching practice which student teachers failed to demonstrate teaching skills such as dealing with teaching challenges and use of appropriate communication skills. The study recommended that colleges should continue emphasize student teachers to harmonize theory and practice during teaching practice to acquire skills necessary in teaching profession. The school should give priority on school leadership and management duties so that student teachers to be able to acquire leadership and management skills.*

KEY WORDS: teaching practice, teaching skills, student teachers

INTRODUCTION

In any society, education plays a key role in inculcating its members with relevant knowledge, attitudes, efficacy, and competence to operate and become problem solvers in their settings. Prominence of education has been advocated and emphasized by both national and

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international agencies. For instance, the United Nations had included “quality education” among 17 sustainable development goals and measures have been taken to achieve the goal (Hák et al., 2016). In the same lines, according to (Lupeja & Komba, 2021), Tanzanian Education has outlined several commitments that includes the provision of 12 years of free and compulsory Basic Education to the entire population and progressive expansion of Technical and Vocational Trainings (Katera & Msafiri, 2020).

In the efforts to universalize primary education, Tanzania has implemented the Primary School Education Development Programs - PEDP (MoEST, 2018), and the major achievements included expansion of enrollment, teacher recruitment and deployment and construction of classroom and sanitary infrastructure. There is an agreement among the scholars on the importance of teachers and their competence in the teaching and learning process. In addition, teachers are instructed in teaching and learning process to bring effective and desirable results among students through using different teaching methods and techniques (Mantra et al., 2019). Therefore, the issue of teaching practice taken into consideration as an opportunity to equip teachers with teaching skills to accomplish their work in appropriate manner.

Thus, teaching practice has been identified as a crucial integral part in the preparation of teachers and initiate them into actual teaching environment (Kihwele & Mtandi, 2020). These skills and knowledge are instilled and nurtured into teachers during their pedagogical training in their respective colleges. In Tanzania, there are different forms of teaching practice adopted in teacher preparation which include; Single Lesson Teaching Practice (SLTP) and Micro Teaching Practice (MT) and Block Teaching Practice (BTP) (MoEST, 2020). Further, there is a guide on teaching practice (TPG) which guide student teachers to acquire both theoretical and practical for their professional. The guide stipulates that, a student teacher has to participate in BTP for 60 days (NACTE, 2015). During BTP session, student teachers are equipped with actual classroom experiences. Hence, there are domains expected to be nourished during BTP includes lesson preparation, classroom management, instruction and communication skills, development and usage of teaching aids (Siddique & Anwer, 2020).

Additional, student teachers are less competent in the process of creating conducive teaching and learning environment that affects classroom management and content deliverance (Kihwele & Mtandi, 2020). Also, in the classroom teachers are ought to be efficient in the instructional and communication skills, the situation is opposite to teachers who most of time needed supervision for effective output (MoEST, 2018). Although instruction and communication skills are important during teaching that support students acquire specific objectives but yet teachers observed to have insufficient communication skills in classroom (Khan et al., 2017). As an instructional person, the teachers have responsibility to select appropriate content, teaching style and teaching materials that support and ensure their students acquire the intended instructions as planned (MoEST, 2018). It is through BTP where the teacher is expected to acquire competence in teaching as well as how to organize various academic materials and work professionally. Since research findings indicate that, some of teachers are completing teaching practice without acquiring necessary skills required in teaching, the researcher was interested to investigate teachers’ perceptions toward the

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effectiveness of teaching practice in improving teaching skills. Teachers' perceptions determined the usefulness of the BTP in improving student teachers teaching skills.

In line to that, perceptions of public primary teachers towards teaching practice is significant because, the readiness, willingness and feelings may affect positive or negative in planning, implementation and assessment (Blazar & Kraft, 2017). The perception of public primary teachers supports experienced teachers to minimize loads of their lesson, support to carry out their plans as well motivate to develop new pedagogies to improve teaching (Ozdas, 2018). Example if a teacher has positive perception towards preparation of lesson plan this means that he or she can deliver proper teaching skills to student teachers. Once teachers had less perception towards student teachers may lead to fail in acquiring competence in the process of creating conducive teaching and learning environment that affects classroom management and content deliverance.

According to Yoon, (2016) BTP brings effect in a sense that student teachers get assistance from experienced teachers with perception towards teaching practice as guidance, mentoring and supervision that improve and evaluate their skills in genuine classroom and school environments. On the other hand, teachers have perception towards teaching practice on teachers' failures in classroom management, lack of materials, school administrations' negative attitudes and behaviors and teachers' being passive in discipline matters (Ozdas, 2018). Thus, the current study aimed to investigate the teachers' perception towards effectiveness of teaching practice in improving student teachers teaching skills in Monduli District, Tanzania.

Statement of the Problem

Perception of teachers towards BTP is significant aspect to improve teaching skills. In emphasized essence of teachers' perception, student teachers were failing to demonstrate the teaching competence as expected. The study conducted by Ozdas, (2018) pinpoint that, once teachers had less perception towards student teachers may lead to fail in acquiring competence in the process of creating conducive teaching and learning environment that affects classroom management and content deliverance. Therefore, stakeholders, parents, students and community have been complaining that their children were not getting appropriate learning from student teachers.

Most reviews (Ritchter et al, 2021; Rahimi & Weisi, 2018; and Uchena et al, 2016) focused on educators' task perception in teaching practice, English language teachers' perception of professional teaching practice and assessment of students' attitudes and perception of teaching practice. Although researchers did studies on perceptions but did not focus the teachers' perceptions towards teaching practice in improving teaching skills which gave a room for a researcher to investigate the primary school teachers' perception towards effectiveness of teaching practice in improving student teachers teaching skills in Monduli district.

Research Questions

How do public primary teachers perceive the effectiveness of teaching practice in improving student teachers teaching skills in Monduli district?

Theoretical framework (Social change Theory)

The Social change theory is mainly proponent by Anthony Smith's in 1973 (SCT). The theory advocates on the importance of change as an alternative to the functionalist of evolutionary change. The theory insist that changes may occur in both thought and behaviour of teachers which can be largely depending on cultural background (Stecher et. al, 2018). The theory suggested that changes depend on transitions of people and culture that enable people to make their own perceptives on how they view the World (Blazar & Kraft, 2017). The perception of teachers may change due to way they view the World. Example teachers may change their perception towards teaching practice as student teachers performed their duties and responsibilities in schools. In addition, the theory of social change is characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organizations or value system that observable difference in any social phenomena over any period of time (Hjarvard, 2014).

Strength of social change theory

The theory is constituting social change results from the interaction of a number of factors. This happens when changes in climatic condition or economic changes that is the impact of a number of factors (Hjarvard, 2014). The theory of social change allows freely interaction among different aspects or groups. For instance, when student teachers went for teaching practice (TP) interact with school administrators, experienced teachers, students, communities' members, environment and teaching facilities. The positive interactions influence of perception toward teachers in teaching practice.

Further, the social change theory predicts the changes is possible. The theory predicts attitudes, ideas, norms and values possible to change in the future. The theory provides the room to allow changes to happen on teachers' perception especially when student teachers accommodate various teaching strategies, development or improvisations of teaching aids as well as use appropriate communication skills.

Moreover, the social theory insists that changes occur as an essential law. Change is the law of nature, occurred in natural courses as a result of planned effort. The enthusiastic response of change becomes a way of life (Armstrong, 2016). The people should obey the laws, regulations, instructions and others guidelines which guide the implementation of responsibilities. For that matter, during teaching practice student teachers were supposed to follow the school regulations and instructions to fulfill their responsibilities and acquire changes of behaviour to meet the required standard of responsibilities including punctuality of class attendance, facilitating teaching, maintaining personality and following code of conduct. This creates collaboration among them, the theory combined cognition and social environment and acquired

ways of thinking and behaviors through interaction with more knowledgeable person (Gredler, 2012).

Weakness of social change theory

The theory is appropriate in change of teachers' perception on teaching practice but it has some weakness in its application, sometimes the theory is time consuming in adopting changes to some individuals who resist to adopt changes.

The Review of Empirical Studies

Richter et al., (2021) did a study in Germany on teacher educators' task perception and its relationship to professional identity and teaching practice. The aim of the study was to assess teacher perception and investigate its relationship with components of their professional identity and their teaching practice. The study used 145 participants includes educators who taught in primary, secondary schools and others taught at colleges such as vocational training teachers. A researcher used qualitative and quantitative in data collection (mixed method approach) to obtain information on teacher educators' task perception and its relationship to professional identity and teaching practice. The findings revealed that teacher educators' task perception on teaching practices are rooted in their professional identity because teacher educators who were categorized as facilitator tend to demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy, job satisfaction, constructivist beliefs about teaching and learning and use more effective teaching strategies. However, the study was conducted in German which has got a different system of education compared to Tanzania. All these gave a room for the current study to have its validity by investigating teachers' perception on teaching practice in improving student teachers teaching skills in public primary schools in Monduli District.

Rahimi and Weisi (2018) ran a study on the impact of research practice on professional teaching practice exploring English Foreign Language teachers' perception. The study targeted 150 participants of English foreign language who were teaching general English courses to adults at different private institution from different countries (Iran, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand). The study employed questionnaires and semi structure interview for data collection. The findings revealed positive perception and attitude on professional teaching practice and English foreign language teachers are properly engaged with research further, research practice influences their professional teaching practice due to the status of research practice and their attitudes and perception towards the impact of research practice on professional teaching practice analysis. Despite of having good findings on educators' perceptions toward teaching practice, the study did not engage other teachers' subjects, and therefore, this gap was filled in this study through examination of teachers' perception toward the impact of BTP in improving student teachers teaching skills in public primary schools in Monduli District.

Uchenna et al. (2016) conducted descriptive study on assessment of students' attitude and perception of teaching practice in Nigeria: Interview and questionnaire were used to generate data from 280 respondents in the category of teachers and head teachers. The findings revealed that teachers have positive perception on attitude towards teaching practice. This was reflected

in their interest in the programme, regular attendance at school and writing of daily lesson notes. Additionally, teachers' perception expressed that they had good relationship with their mentors and this assisted in improving their teaching skills. Findings on supervision provided by lecturers showed that rural school teachers perception were dissatisfied with their supervision, as some of them were not supervised. Contrary, the study concentrated on the students' attitude and perception on teaching practice, this gives the room for the current study to be conducted on the teachers' perceptions towards effectiveness of teaching practice in improving student teachers teaching skills in public primary schools in Monduli District.

Aliyyah et al., (2020) did a study on perceptions of primary school teachers of online learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic period in Indonesia. The purpose of the study was exploring the perceptions of primary school teachers of online learning in a program developed in Indonesia. The study used case study in research design. Also, semi structure open ended questions were used to generate data from 67 elementary school teachers. The findings of this study indicate that teachers should create online learning frameworks that take into account student backgrounds, particularly family economic backgrounds, as well as students' learning experiences and needs in order to implement the national curriculum during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Contrary, the study concentrated on the teachers' perception on online learning, this gives the room for the current study to be conducted on the teachers' perceptions toward the effectiveness of BTP in improving student teachers teaching skills in public primary schools in Monduli District.

Taimur et al., (2021) conducted the study in Japan, Pakistan and USA on teachers' Perception on Successes and Challenges Associated with Digital Teaching Practice during COVID-19 Pandemic School Closure. The aim of study was to capture the teachers' perspective on pedagogies implemented in teaching and learning. The study used 141 respondents who include kindergarten teachers. A researcher used qualitative research method under purposive sampling in data collection. The findings revealed that teachers experiencing a rapid and unprepared shift to virtual education and also recognized that students who are from marginal socioeconomic household were disadvantages during driven education. The study focused on teachers' perception on successes and challenges associated with digital teaching practice during COVID-19 pandemic school closure. These gave a room for the current study to have its validity by investigating teachers' perception on teaching practice in improving teachers teaching skills in public primary schools in Monduli District.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent design under the mixed methods. In convergent research, the researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data, analyses all quantitative and qualitative datasets differently, and then equates the outcomes of both datasets', and assesses if the findings supported or contradicted to each other. The target population was 691 of public primary school teachers found in Monduli District, Tanzania that covered 63 public primary schools. The sample drawn from the target population was 6 head of schools and 94 public primary school teachers which taken from 6 primary schools through systematic, stratified and

simple random sampling equivalent to 12.5% (Ogula, 2009). In quantitative data, the reliability was assessed by using Cronbach alpha method which is measure the internal consistency. The data collected from questionnaires was coded and hence analysed by using Statistic Package of Social Science Version25 and presented into tables, and frequency. In qualitative data was analyzed, summarized and coded then presented in narration form according to the themes generated from the research questions The current study considered all ethical issues in the whole process of conducting this study such as ensuring that all information provided by respondents used for research purpose only and not otherwise.

PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION OF STUDY FINDINGS

The study was aimed on investigating the teachers' perception on effectiveness of teaching practice in improving student teachers teaching skills at Monduli district. The study findings covered the responses of primary school teachers as presented in Table 1. Additionally, the responses based on likert scale items which relied on five agreement scales strong agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strong disagree.

Table 1: Teachers Perception towards the Effectiveness of BTP in Improving Student Teachers Teaching Skills

Items	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Harmonize theory and practice	-	-	-	-	1	1.1	27	31.0	59	67.8	4.67
School leadership and management skills	-	-	1	1.2	2	2.3	27	31.4	56	65.1	4.60
Learn life skills	-	-	2	2.3	14	16.3	21	24.4	49	57.0	4.36
Learning teaching behaviour and public services	-	-	4	4.7	-	-	29	33.7	53	61.6	4.52
Dealing with teaching challenges	2	2.3	1	1.2	6	7.0	19	22.1	58	67.4	4.51
Enable to fulfil responsible	-	-	3	3.5	-	-	28	32.6	55	64.0	4.57
Learn from experienced teachers' roles, abilities and techniques	-	-	1	1.2	8	9.3	23	26.7	54	62.8	4.51
Evaluate personal ability in teaching	-	-	-	-	6	7.0	27	31.4	53	61.6	4.55
Capable in creating conducive environment	-	-	2	2.3	1	1.2	22	25.6	61	70.9	4.65
Practice appropriate communication skills	2	2.3	-	-	3	3.5	23	26.7	58	67.4	4.57

Source: Field (2022)

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree and SD=Strongly Disagree

The data from table 1, exposed various perceptions on effective areas of the teaching practice programme in ensuring that student teachers are equipped with sufficient teaching skills. One among them included the ability to harmonise theories and practices (mean score = 4.67). The results revealed that 98.8% of public primary school teachers agreed that student teachers harmonized theory and practice during teaching practice (BTP). Also, none of the primary teachers disagreed that student teachers harmonize theory and practice.

This indicates that in an effort to ensure excellent educational practice, theory helps academics and instructors critically reflect on educational policy and classroom practice. To create meaning in teaching, a vast array of abilities, strategies, plans, and arrangements must be integrated. Through teaching practice, the student teacher learnt how to associate those potential elements for a productive classroom. This reflects the engagement of student teachers in the preparation of schemes of works, lesson plans, and subject books as well as classroom organisation and management. The results are supported by Ameri, (2020) who recommended that the relationship between practice and theory is significant because it indicates a person's capacity to use evidence to deepen their understanding of essential ideas, support individual choices and guide future behaviour. Also the result is supported by experimentalism theory which state that the principal of learning should be activity based.

Also, the results as presented in table 1, revealed that school leadership and management are among the student teachers' teaching skills (mean score = 4.60). The results have shown that 96.7% of public primary teachers agreed that student teachers during teaching practice obtained skills concerning school leadership and management. Also, 1.2% of public primary teachers disagreed that student teachers during teaching practice were not assisted in acquiring school leadership and management skills.

This reflects that school leadership is among the skills obtained during teaching practice to student teachers that assist in planning, implementation, and assessment. Where there is poor management, the whole system might fail to perform different activities within the school. Some school leaders have a good leadership style that impacts fellow employees, which translates to good achievement for teachers and students, thus influencing student teachers to imitate the skills of leadership. For example, some leaders are transparent in leading and involving workers in various roles, including the use of funds in different activities. In some schools, student teachers were appointed as leaders and worked on various responsibilities such as leading student governments and conducting meetings within the school, which helped student teachers acquire leadership and management skills. According to Maluleka, (2021) found that the correct environments for schools are developed with the help of educational leadership. A successful school leader develops a nurturing, productive environment where pupils and workers can grow.

Not only that but also the results in table 1, revealed that 81.4% of public primary teachers agreed that the teaching practice programme assisted public primary teachers to learn life skills in partnership with the community around the school while 2.3% of public primary teachers disagreed that the teaching practice programme did not give student teachers life skills (mean score = 4.36).

This indicates that teaching practice programme assisted student teachers to be exposed in various life situation include the community and learn how to associate themselves with other individuals in various social activities that involve them in one way or another such as tragedies, weddings, and other social events. For example, sometimes student teachers participated in different tasks like repairing the transport infrastructure around their

communities. Teaching practice program has helped student teachers to engage in entrepreneurial activities. According to Alajmi, (2019) found that to make it possible for the individual to live with a variety of people and engage in social interactions with them in a way that fosters adaptation, the capacity for occupation, and involvement in the process of the individual's economic, social, and political development.

One of the head teachers argued that

When student teachers come for training, they participate in various activities. Other times you find that they are engaged in fetching water a little far from their compass for their needs and also finding energy like firewood because charcoal and electricity are not highly used in our areas for cooking (Interview; 29 June 2022).

The interview indicates that during teaching practice, student teachers acquire different skills, including life skills. Teaching practice not only prepares student teachers for their profession, but it also provides various skills to cope with daily living life, such as collaboration with others in various activities and participation in entrepreneurship activities.

Additionally, table 1, revealed that 95.3% of public primary teachers agreed that the programme helped student teachers to learn teaching behaviour and public service as among the skills expected in teaching practice, while 4.7% of public primary teachers disagreed that teaching practice did not give student teachers the skills to learn good teaching behaviour and public service (mean score = 4.51).

This points out that most of the student teachers are gaining an opportunity to learn good teaching behaviour practically rather than through how they were taught at the college. Most of the student teachers are still teenagers, with an average age range of less than 20 years old. Therefore, with respect to these results, it is clear that the teaching practice programme has a significant impact in assisting student teachers to be molded and reshaped into good teaching behaviour and have a teaching spirit that resembles what an imaginary teacher would expect. Through teaching practice, it has been realized that student teachers get an opportunity to learn public service ethics and code of conduct, which, at the end of the day, reshape them and become good teachers after college completion. The study by Mingoia et al. (2019) found that the majority of adolescent students presented a variety of negative behaviors related to alcohol or drug abuse, including the availability of drug supplies and lack of motivation for housework, homework, or other tasks.

One of the head teachers said that

Some student teachers have bad morals that are incompatible with the teaching profession. Others come wearing tight clothes with motleys or even over-colored clothes, which basically remove the respect and increase the child's concentration towards the teacher. However, we always fight with them through the disciplinary committee here at school and strive to teach them productive values in the work of serving the community, because the teacher should be a mirror of the community wherever he is (Interview; 12 July 2022).

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According to the interview, teaching practice helped student teachers gain skills for learning various teaching behaviors and public services that helped them build their teaching professional. Teaching practice established that student teachers understood the proper way of behaving during teaching and also understood the value of teaching in serving society.

Moreover, in table 1, the study results revealed that the teaching practice programme assisted student teachers in building capacity to deal with various teaching challenges relating to teaching and learning. The responses revealed that 89.5% of primary school teachers agreed that the teaching practice programme facilitated student teachers to deal with various teaching challenges relating to teaching and learning, while 4.5% of primary school teachers disagreed that the teaching practice programme facilitated student teachers to deal with various teaching challenges (mean score = 4.51).

This indicates that student teachers performed their day-to-day duties and solved daily challenges encountered during teaching, such as large numbers of learners in a class or difficult topics during teaching. These gave an opportunity to a student teacher to apply skills to overcome the challenge of a large number of learners faced during teaching; grouping learners into two groups; and using learner-centered strategies to teach learners. The results related by Keiler (2018) who suggested that teachers should employ student-centered strategies that help students develop the ability to engage in a variety of teaching activities and ensure that learners have been directed and have learned in a supportive environment to a large extent.

Also, the data indicated that 93% of the public primary teachers agreed that student teachers acquired skills that assist in evaluating their personal ability, while none of the public primary teachers disagreed that student teachers acquired skills that assist in evaluating their personal ability in teaching (mean score =4.55).

This revealed that teaching practice helped student teachers to evaluate their ability in teaching and know how to improve their weaknesses in the teaching and learning process. The teaching practice programme assisted student teachers to have the ability to evaluate themselves on how to prepare for a scheme of work, lesson plan, and content delivery. Similarly, the teaching practice provides numerous opportunities for student teachers to evaluate their performance in terms of teaching aid preparation, time management, and implementation of teaching strategies. This offered the opportunity for student teachers to recognize their knowledge and skill gaps. Also, Ivanova & Skara-MincLne (2016) recommended that, through teaching practice, student teachers utilize self-evaluation to help students build the learning skills necessary for professional competence as well as to increase their awareness of and responsibility for their own learning processes.

Also, the head teacher who argued that

When student teachers come to practical teaching training, they get a good chance to learn how to measure themselves in their teaching so that they can become effective and productive teachers for society, and they get the whole picture of how they taught in the classroom (Interview; 15 July 2022).

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According to the interview, teaching practice enabled student teachers to acquire teaching skills of evaluated personal ability in teaching. This helps them to evaluate what they have done when teaching and know the best way to correct themselves as an advantage for their profession.

Apart from that, data as summarised in table 1 revealed that 94.1% of the primary teachers agreed that the teaching practice programme assisted them to acquire appropriate communication skills during teaching practice, while 2.3% of public primary teachers disagreed that teaching practice assisted student teachers to acquire communication skills (mean score = 4.57) from data collected.

This implies that student teachers used appropriate communication skills that supported students in acquiring specific objectives. Teaching practice has a positive impact on student teachers as it helps them acquire communication skills in different contexts such as speaking, writing, and listening. Through these skills, they gave student teachers the ability to present vocabulary in an appropriate manner during teaching, listen to students during sharing knowledge in class, and also write appropriately. During teaching practice, student teachers used appropriate communication skills that assisted learners to expand their language in speaking, writing, and listening. The results correspond by Biglu et al. (2017) who found that, learning communication skills as one of the most important issues that both teachers and students should consider in educational systems.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that majority of teachers had positive perception towards teaching practice in improving teaching skills. The grounded on teachers' perception, teaching practice is essential to student teachers in equipping with sufficient teaching skills like in harmonize theory and practice, learning life skills around community and also practice communication skills that enabled in development of teaching competence in their profession. Also, minority of teachers had negative perception on teaching practice therefore student teachers failed to demonstrate teaching skills such as dealing with teaching challenges and use of appropriate communication skills.

The study recommended that colleges should continue emphasize on the way that student teachers to harmonize theory and practice during teaching practice so that to acquire skills necessary in teaching profession. The school should give priority on school leadership and management duties to student teachers to be able to acquire leadership and management skills

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