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Exploring Concerns Raised by University-Based Supervisors of Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) Students on Teaching Practice (TP)

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Abstract:

Teaching practice (TP) is a fundamental component of teacher education and preparation. The importance of TP lies in that it brings reality to theoretical underpinnings of the practice of education. Concerns have been raised by university-based lecturers arising from supervision of Post-graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) student's on TP. We argue that knowledge of such concerns are pertinent bases for continuous professional development of teacher education lecturers as a learning community aimed at improving the quality of student teacher development. This study sought to analyze concerns observed by university-based supervisors of PGDE students on teaching practice. Undergirded by an interpretive framework, this study employed a case study design involving university-based supervisors from two Zimbabwean universities offering the PGDE programme. Purposive sampling assisted in identification of twenty information-rich participants involved in the supervision of PGDE students on TP. Data generation techniques included in-depth interviews and document analysis. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis where themes emerged from the data. Findings revealed that most students generally did not prepare for their teaching in advance, lacked confidence, and shifted into a panic mode upon arrival of University-based supervisors. Others failed to reflect the scientific structure of a lesson in their lesson plan and lesson delivery. Others taught without media, and if they had these were poorly designed. Marking of learners written work was not communicative, and at times not done. Evaluations were neither responsive to set objectives nor followed up in later planning. The study recommends that student teachers be given practice in detailed lesson planning, media selection and development, and that each student needs be provided with micro teaching experience prior to TP, coupled with clinical supervision at the onset of TP. Furthermore, there is need for a connectedness between school-based and university-based supervisors to standardize expectations.

Keywords: *Teacher development, student teacher, PGDE, teaching practice, teaching practice supervision, lecturers' concerns*

1. Introduction

Teaching practice (TP) is an indispensable component of any teacher education or preparation programme. As Furlong et al. (1988) observe, TP provides beginning teachers or student teachers with the opportunity to be socialised into the profession. This socialisation process enables student teachers or teacher trainees to acquire and develop purposeful scientific experiences that include knowledge and skills needed to perform their future roles as qualified teachers (Mostafa, 2005, in Wambugu et al., 2013). Thus, TP situates itself in a key position in teacher education programmes. As a culminating experience in any teacher preparation programme, TP provides the teacher educator with some prediction of the future success of a teacher. As Farauta and Omuche (2013) argue, TP then becomes a yardstick or factor determining the quality of a teacher education programme. In other words, a teacher education programme would be incomplete without the TP component because TP brings to life the theoretical underpinnings of the practice of education at a given level. Arguably, the TP component takes the student from the college world of theory into the practical field of classroom practice. It is also the time when the student teacher gets to work with experienced, qualified teachers, variably known as school-based mentors, which is a crucial step in one's learning to be an effective teacher (Wilson et al., 2001).