

Secondary School Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of School-Based Teaching Practice

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Enhancing education quality requires effective teacher development programs, particularly in developing countries where many teachers lack adequate preparation. This study investigated secondary school pre-service teachers' perspectives on their clinical teaching practice experiences. Using a cross-sectional survey, data were collected from 119 third-year pre-service teachers who completed their teaching practicum in 2022. A questionnaire provided both quantitative and qualitative insights, analyzed through SPSS, descriptive statistics and content analysis. Findings showed that most participants (88.6%) felt adequately prepared for clinical practice but noted limited support from cooperating teachers. While they reported sufficient guidance during the practicum, concerns arose about the fairness and objectivity of clinical evaluations. Despite general satisfaction with the program, they emphasized the need for more practical training in lesson planning and fair assessment in specialized areas. These findings highlight the program's overall effectiveness while calling attention to the roles of supervisors and mentor teachers in supporting pre-service teachers.

Keywords: clinical teaching practice, mentor teachers, pre-service teachers, supervisors, Malawi, teaching

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing the quality of education in developing nations necessitates focused teacher training, as the majority of instructors are underqualified or unskilled. This issue stems from countries prioritizing the achievement of the Sustainable development goals 2030 in education (Demirbağ & Sezgin, 2021). While this approach increased access to education, it inadvertently led to a decline in the overall quality of instruction. Recent studies, such as those by Fauzi and Johan (2024), emphasize that improving learning outcomes begins with enhancing teacher effectiveness. Similarly, Bakija-Haraçija et al. (2024) underscore the need for well-designed teaching practice programs that equip student teachers with academic qualifications, professional skills, and a strong moral commitment to their roles. These studies collectively highlight that the skills and character of teachers are crucial variables influencing the quality of education and its contribution to national development.

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Despite these findings, governments often resort to hiring unqualified or underqualified teachers to meet SDG targets. This raises fundamental questions: “Who is a teacher?” and “Is teaching a profession or merely a task?” Balogun et al. (2018) define teachers as experts in their content areas, facilitators of learning processes, and individuals dedicated to helping others learn and develop. However, these definitions remain subjective and vary across contexts. Olsen and Wyss (2022) argue that the quality of an education system is determined by teachers’ academic qualifications and the extent of their professional and in-service training, not merely the system's willingness to change. This aligns with El-Hamamsy et al. (2023), who advocate for continuous professional development to improve instructional quality.

The current situation reveals a significant gap in teacher preparation programs, particularly in emerging nations. While efforts have been made to improve access to education, the lack of focus on professional development for educators undermines these initiatives. Kishindo-Mafuta (2021) asserts that quality education involves equipping learners with relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes for life. Consequently, institutions like Mzuzu University (Mzuni) have prioritized pre-service training programs to address this gap. Mpewe and Kalima (2023) highlight Mzuni’s commitment to preparing student teachers through structured teaching practice programs, ensuring they are well-equipped to facilitate learning effectively.

Teaching practice is the culminating experience for student teachers in professional education courses, as noted by Gursel-Bilgin and Boğaziçi University (2023). In Malawi, student teachers engage in a 13–14 week teaching practicum, equivalent to one school term, during which they receive guidance from school administrators and cooperating teachers. This structured program aims to develop competent educators through behavior modeling and reflective practice (Suphasri, 2021). Similarly, Tanzanian and Kenyan institutions emphasize teaching practice as an essential component of teacher education, with student teachers undertaking practical placements in secondary schools under the supervision of experienced educators and university lecturers. These practices aim to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, as supported by Assalihee and Boonsuk (2023).

Despite these structured programs, significant challenges persist. For instance, the experiences of student teachers during teaching practicums often reveal gaps in supervision, assessment, and the provision of feedback. In Malawi, teaching practice serves as a critical assessment tool for teacher preparation quality, yet student teachers frequently face difficulties related to clinical supervision and instructional strategies. Research by Gan et al. (2021) demonstrates that student feedback is integral to enhancing instructional effectiveness and improving institutional practices.

This study builds on these insights by exploring the experiences and challenges faced by pre-service student teachers during their teaching practicum. Specifically, it investigates the major issues encountered during the 12-week Teaching Practicum Session in the 2022 academic year at Mzuzu University. By examining these experiences and gathering feedback from student teachers, this research aims to identify practical solutions to improve teacher preparation programs. Dan and Liu (2021) emphasize that teaching practice is a fundamental element of teacher education, enabling trainees to integrate theory with practice while addressing diverse student needs. Furthermore, the inclusion of student reflections and feedback is crucial for assessing and enhancing the quality of teacher training programs.

Purpose of the Study

This research aims to contribute to the development of pre-service teacher training programs by providing actionable recommendations for improving teaching practice programs. By focusing on clinical teaching practices and supervision, the study seeks to inform and improve current practices, policies, and program structures in teacher education. The findings will highlight practical solutions

for addressing gaps in supervision, feedback, and instructional strategies, thereby enhancing teacher preparation and, ultimately, the quality of education in developing nations.

Research questions

Specifically, the study sought to address the following five research questions:

1. How did pre-service teachers rate their confidence and readiness for clinical teaching practice?
2. How did pre-service teachers perceive the extent of support received during teaching practice at both the school level and from supervisors?
3. What aspects of the teaching practice did they like the most and did not like at all?
4. How did they rate their overall level of satisfaction with teaching practice experience?
5. What suggestions did pre-service teachers put forward for improving future teaching practice exercises?

Literature review

Studies have shown that the quality of student teachers' preparation is significantly influenced by their teaching practice experiences. Aspiring educators often consider teaching practice as the most beneficial component of teacher preparation (Aglazor, 2017). To grow professionally and change their attitudes toward teaching, student teachers must engage in teaching practice. This paper reviews various definitions of teaching practice, its goals, challenges faced by student teachers, and solutions suggested by researchers.

Sakkoulis et al. (2018) defined teaching practice as an opportunity for student teachers to apply theory in real-world settings while receiving specialized in-service training. Koross (2016) expanded on this, viewing teaching practice as the range of experiences student teachers have while working in classrooms and educational institutions. Mannathoko (2013) emphasized that teaching practice allows student teachers to apply newly learned skills in real classroom settings. The integration of theory and practice is key, as teaching is viewed as a problem-solving activity. Teaching practice enables students to become proficient by experiencing classroom realities firsthand, integrating theoretical knowledge into their teaching strategies (Cishe et al., 2015).

The goal of teaching practice is to develop competent educators. Suphasri (2021b) argued that it provides student teachers with the opportunity to apply pedagogical theory in real classroom settings, thus growing into informed, reflective educators. Gujjar (2010) highlighted that teaching practice fosters the development of professional knowledge, self-control, interpersonal skills, and attitudes essential for a successful teaching career. It helps student teachers understand school environments and prepares them for the realities of the classroom. Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) emphasized that teaching practice allows student teachers to refine their teaching skills and expand their subject knowledge. Through lesson planning and execution, they gain an understanding of teaching techniques and assessment methods. Teaching practice offers opportunities to grow professionally in various knowledge areas, such as pedagogical, subject matter, pastoral, and personal knowledge (Mannathoko, 2013b). Student teachers benefit from observing seasoned educators, learning from academic supervisors before and after lessons.

In Nigeria, teaching practice has been similarly important in student teacher preparation (Ogonor & Badmus, 2006). It allows student teachers to test classroom theories, implement instructional strategies, and understand professional and instructional environments. It also provides an opportunity to explore available teaching resources and learn how to select appropriate materials (Timilehin et al., 2014). In Kenya, teaching practice has proven crucial in helping student teachers understand real-

world teaching challenges (Cheruiyot, 2024). It also provides a platform for personal and professional growth.

Despite its importance, teaching practice presents several challenges. Many student teachers struggle with handling teacher resources and content, which can negatively impact their attitudes toward teaching and perceptions of the profession (Mannathoko, 2013c). In Kenya, Newton (2013) found that many student teachers lacked essential curriculum resources, which hindered their teaching experience. Additional issues included transportation problems, inadequate housing, and insufficient financial resources. Kiggundu & Nayimuli (2009) identified behavioral problems among students, where misbehaving students took advantage of knowing that their teacher was a student teacher. Other issues included harassment of female student teachers, transportation difficulties, and variations in lesson plan structures between universities and attachment schools.

Studies conducted at Sokoine University in Tanzania (Bechuke et al., 2013) revealed that student teachers faced challenges such as misaligned teaching schedules, insufficient materials and financial support, and a hostile attitude from secondary school pupils and in-service instructors. The study also noted a lack of time for teaching practice, inadequate supervision, and limited reference resources. Studies in Australia has indicated that teaching practice face many challenges despite ongoing reform of the programme (Nghia et al., 2017). The difficulty concerned budgeting and forecasting of workloads for the hosting schools during teaching practices which resulted in a lack of financial and resource support. In South Africa, Mubika & Bukaliya (2013) found that mentors were often untrained and lacked adequate knowledge of their responsibilities. Moreover, university professors did not routinely visit practice schools, which was detrimental to the success of teaching practice.

To address these challenges, Newton (2013) proposed solutions such as improved supervision through pre- and post-lesson meetings. These meetings would allow university supervisors to assess the lesson's effectiveness and provide feedback to student teachers. Additionally, Newton suggested that the government, NGOs, and the community should provide sufficient curriculum materials, infrastructure, and social services like housing and transportation. The financial support for student teachers should also be improved, along with measures to address the harassment of female student teachers. Emphasized that proper mentorship and support from cooperating teachers could significantly enhance student teachers' commitment to teaching ("Mentoring Relationships: Cooperating Teachers' Perspectives on Mentoring Student Interns," 2011).

In Malawi, the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP) 2020–2030 emphasizes a strategic expansion of primary and secondary education to a more sustainable and quality-centered approach and this has still led to a growing demand for qualified teachers. However, the supply of trained teachers has not kept pace with demand, despite efforts to increase the number of teachers through various delivery modes, including parallel and open learning programs. The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS III, 2017–2022) identified challenges in teacher education, such as inconsistent policies, inadequate funding, and shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas, along with, implementation gaps, governance and institutional challenges, social inequalities, infrastructure deficits, slow progress in structural transformation, and challenges in education sectors, all of which hindered progress in improving the quality of education and achieving national development goals. Teacher education in Malawi focuses on preparing teachers for both primary and secondary school levels, with diploma and degree programs available.

Mzuzu University in Malawi uses clinical supervision for teaching practice, following the models proposed by Good (1973), Beach and Reinhartz (2000), and Goldhammer (1969). Clinical supervision involves observing teachers in action, providing feedback, and stimulating professional growth. Kamphinda and Chilemba (2019) defined clinical supervision as a leadership effort aimed at improving instruction, developing professional growth, and revising educational objectives.

Kaphagawani and Useh (2018) emphasized that clinical supervision facilitates dialogue and helps address teachers' concerns. Mzuzu University employs Goldhammer's five-step clinical supervision model, which is designed to improve teaching quality by observing and guiding student teachers in real classroom environments.

Figure 1 illustrates the five stages of the instructional supervision training program model that has been advocated for use by the instructional supervisor and the teacher as they focus on classroom instructional interactions.

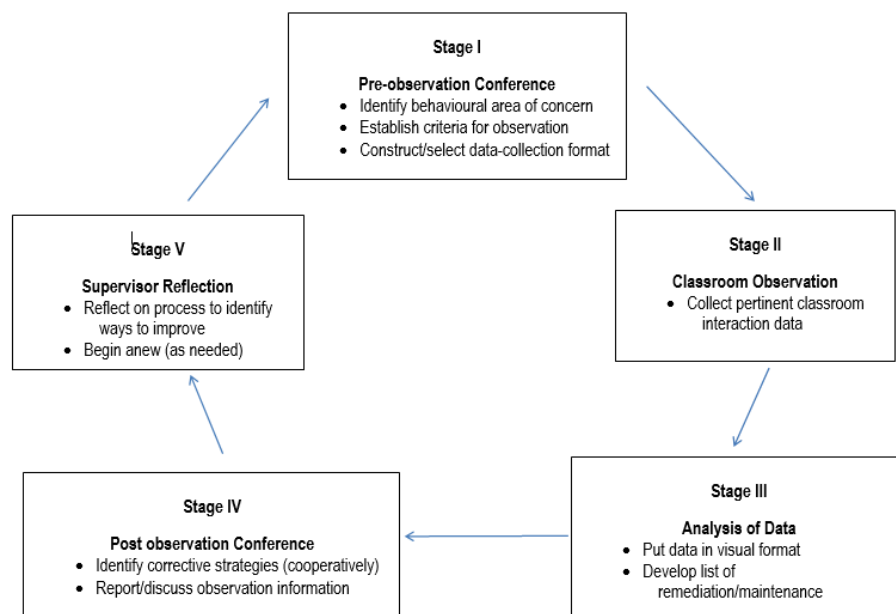


Figure 1

The instructional supervision training program

Source: Beach et al. (2000) Supervisory Leadership: Focus on Instruction. p.135.

Figure 1 above shows a five-stage clinical supervision model that can best equip the instructional supervisor and the teacher with the knowledge and skills to improve instructional performance.

The premise that clinical supervision concentrates "on actual classroom practices which ensure that the process is of practical significance to the teacher" (p.183) is supported by (Tanner & Tanner, 1987). Additionally, empowering educators to make decisions about their education, helps to foster the development of teachers' confidence and self-direction.

METHOD

Study design

The study used a cross-sectional survey design with a descriptive quantitative methodology. A cross-sectional survey approach is suitable for gathering data from participants on an interesting issue at a certain moment in time (Kesmodel, 2018). The fact that the study solely collected data from participants and did not alter the study setting further supports the appropriateness of the design.

Population and sample

The population of this study is all 171 level 3 pre-service teachers in science, arts and language, and education programs in the Faculty of Education at Mzuzu University. The intention was to gather data from the entire study population, but 41 participants were unavailable when the questionnaire was administered. Therefore, the sample selected through random sampling consisted of 119 participants who responded to the questionnaire representing a response rate of nearly 70% (i.e., 69.6%). Saleh et al. (2017), only when a return rate is less than 60% is further analysis required to determine whether significant variations between respondents and non-respondents would have negative implications on the findings. According to Saleh et al. (2018), a response rate of roughly 70% is sufficient for survey research to yield objective conclusions. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by sex and program of study. As seen from the table, female respondents were underrepresented but also reflective of the actual proportion of females, especially in science programs. Additionally, the actual enrolment numbers for science and upgrading students are low, which is also reflected in Table 1.

Table 1
Program * Sex Cross tabulation

Program	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
BAE	52	22	74
BSCE	29	7	36
BAEF	8	1	9
Total	89	30	119

Key: BAE = Bachelor of Arts (Education); BSCE = Bachelor of Science (Education)
BAEF = Bachelor of Arts Education (French).

Data collection and analysis

A structured questionnaire with closed and open-ended items was used to gather quantitative and qualitative data to address the research questions. The questionnaire was constructed based on the author's over 15 years of experience in clinical supervision of student teachers during teaching practice. Theory in teacher preparation also informed its development. Some of the close-ended 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire items were adapted from the work of Buzuzi and Nyaumwe (2014), where strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree, were coded; 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively, to indicate the level of agreement with a number of statements which sought their views about teaching practice. Therefore, for positively worded items, the larger the number, the more positive the respondents' views related to the item. It was decided that a questionnaire would be a good way to quickly gather student instructors' opinions regarding their experiences with clinical teaching practice.

Regarding validity and reliability, the questionnaire was reviewed by an experienced teacher educator who has been involved in teaching practice for more than 15 years to establish content and face validity. The questionnaire was also pilot-tested with five pre-service teachers who had already done teaching practice the previous year to reduce ambiguity and measurement error, which led to rephrasing certain items in the questionnaire for clarity. Additionally, some items were deliberately repeated to assess the consistency of responses by participants. Furthermore the researcher conducted Cronbach's Alpha using SPSS 21 and all items had moderate to acceptable Cronbach's Alpha. Finally, to ensure the accuracy of responses from participants, the questionnaire was administered by the researcher using offline way to address questions that respondents had. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis of the responses provided on the questionnaire by seeking patterns and themes concerning each research question, while quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 21 and descriptive statistics.

Table 1, the reliability test, results indicate high internal consistency for all categorical variables, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7. **Teacher Support** ($\alpha=0.961$, 4 items) and **Supervisor Feedback** ($\alpha=0.944$, 4 items) show excellent reliability, suggesting that their items are highly cohesive in measuring their respective constructs. **Prepared for TP** ($\alpha=0.933$, 3 items) also demonstrates very high reliability, while **Course Content** ($\alpha=0.901$, 3 items) and **Balanced Content** ($\alpha=0.815$, 3 items) exhibit strong consistency. These results confirm that the scales used for these variables are reliable and appropriate for measuring their intended constructs in the study.

Table 1
Reliability test

Categorical variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Course content	.901	3
Balance content	.815	3
Prepared for TP	.933	3
Teacher support	.961	4
Supervisor Feedback	.944	4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings in alignment with the research questions, focusing on pre-service teachers' self-assessment of their confidence and readiness for school-based clinical teaching practice (TP). Additionally, the section examines the support provided at the school level during TP, the feedback from supervision, and the relationships among key variables. These findings provide insights into the effectiveness of the program and identify areas for improvement.

The tables below detail key findings from the study, including, correlation analysis, regression and descriptive statistics results. They shed light on the interconnected factors that contribute to overall satisfaction with the teaching practice program and identify predictors of success.

Pre-service teachers' self-rating of their confidence and readiness for school-based clinical teaching practice (TP), school-level support during TP and supervision feedback

Table 2
Categorization of assessment items in question (N = 119).

Categorization of items	Items for self-rating of their confidence and readiness
Course content, methodology & ETS	Course content prepared me adequately for TP
	Methodology courses prepared me adequately for TP
	Education Foundation Courses (ETS Courses) prepared me adequately for TP
Balanced content	There was proper balance between content and methodology courses
	There was too much content and too little methodology courses
	There was a proper balance between theory and practice in course work
Prepared for TP	I was well prepared to teach my major than my minor
	TP orientation prepared me adequately for TP
	I felt very well prepared and confident for TP
School level support	Cooperating teacher(s) provided most support
	School head teacher provided useful support
	Teachers at school were very supportive
	Fellow student teachers provided useful help
Supervision feedback	I got a lot of professional advice during reflection and discussion after clinical supervision
	Supervisors provided constructed comments after clinical supervision
	Supervisors usually provided feedback in written form
	All lecturers who supervised me were very objective and fair

Table 3, the correlation analysis, reveals strong interrelationships among variables, with **Balanced Content**, **Preparedness for Teaching Practice (TP)**, and **Supervisor Feedback** emerging as key factors positively correlated with other variables. **Balanced Content** shows very strong correlations with **Preparedness for TP** ($r=0.962$, $p<0.01$), **School level Support** ($r=0.834$, $p<0.01$), and **Supervisor Feedback** ($r=0.873$, $p<0.01$), emphasizing its critical role in program success. Similarly, **Supervisor Feedback** exhibits the highest correlation with **Teacher Support** ($r=0.983$, $p<0.01$), highlighting its centrality in improving satisfaction and effectiveness. While **Gender** has minimal influence, strong positive correlations among **Course Content**, **School level Support**, and **Program** underscore their interconnected importance. These findings suggest that enhancing balanced content and feedback systems can significantly improve overall program outcomes.

Table 3
Correlation analysis

	Gender	Course content	Balance content	Prepared for TP	Teacher support	Program	Supervisor Feedback
Gender	1						
Course content, methodology & ETS	-.009	1					
Balanced content	-.182*	.471**	1				
Preparedness for TP	-.144	.572**	.962**	1			
School level support	-.026	.787**	.834**	.900**	1		
Program	.141	.489**	.905**	.882**	.789**	1	
Supervisor feedback	-.070	.706**	.873**	.928**	.983**	.803**	1

P**< .01, P*< .05

In general, pre- service teachers felt well-prepared and confident about themselves for their clinical teaching practice, they also agreed that content courses, methodology courses, and education foundation courses prepared them adequately for TP. Additionally, the majority of the student teachers agreed that there was a proper balance between content and methodology courses and also perceived Teaching Practice orientation as a contributing factor to their adequate preparation for clinical teaching practice.

Table 4, the regression analysis, shows that **Course Content, methodology & ETS** ($B=1.571$, $p<0.001$) and **Balanced Content** ($B=1.799$, $p<0.001$) are the strongest positive predictors of overall satisfaction, explaining 84.5% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.845$). However, **Preparedness for Teaching Practice** ($B=-0.642$, $p<0.05$) and **Supervision Feedback** ($B=-1.319$, $p<0.001$) negatively and significantly impact satisfaction, suggesting these areas need improvement. **School level Support** ($B=0.166$, $p>0.05$) and **Program** ($B=-0.156$, $p>0.05$) were not significant predictors. These results highlight the importance of well-designed, balanced content while emphasizing the need to address gaps in teaching practice preparedness and supervision feedback to enhance overall satisfaction.

Table 4
Linear regression analysis of predictors of pre-service teachers' satisfaction with teaching practice

Variables	B	Std. Error	t	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F Change
Course content, methodology&ETS	1.571	.165	9.536***				
Balanced content	1.799	.167	10.765***				
Preparedness for TP	-.642	.247	-2.602*	.919	.845	.837	101.769
School level support	.166	.438	.380				
Supervision feedback	-1.319	.373	-3.535***				
Program	-.156	.092	-1.692				

a. Dependent Variable: Overall level of satisfaction, p***<.001, P*<0.05

Regarding the supervision and mentorship assistance offered by instructors, student teachers generally expressed agreement that they received sufficient help and guidance during their practicum. The role of cooperating teachers as mentors as defined by the Teaching Practice Handbook at Mzuzu University's Faculty of Education includes: supervising and mentoring student teachers; observing student teacher lessons; and evaluating student teacher's lessons (Mzuzu University, 2020). It is generally anticipated that school heads and serving teachers at school would still support student teachers, teacher training institutions expect that cooperating teachers would provide the most needed support in coaching and mentoring them as these novice teachers are directly under their close supervision. In some cases, student teachers teach the same subject and class (es) taught by the cooperating teacher. The results of this study imply that, for whatever reason, mentor instructors are not carrying out their intended responsibilities. This may also point to coordination challenges arising from the lack of a shared understanding between Mzuzu University and schools regarding the role of mentor teachers. An ideal mentorship role is defined as a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person to promote the latter's professional and/or personal development (The Regents of the University of Michigan et al., 2024).

In our view, if mentors were fulfilling this ideal role, student-teachers would benefit a lot from such a relationship. However, as Izadinia (2015) indicate, such an interaction is rarely realized in practice. Anecdotally, it has been reported that mentor teachers go on recess while trainee teachers take over their classes. This is retrogressive development, as mentees are deprived of an opportunity to learn from expert teachers within a community of practice. Student teachers are already confronted with many challenges, including the pressure of time and anxiety to master the art and science of teaching, and they need close mentorship to grow into effective teachers. According to Altan and Sağlamel (2015), cooperating teachers may have an impact on student-teachers decisions to stay in the teaching profession as well as their professional growth, sense of career satisfaction, and opinions about the role of the teaching profession, instructional strategies, and philosophies.

Aspects of the teaching practice liked the most and not liked at all

Table 5

Aspects liked by student teachers

Aspect	Frequency
School level support from teachers/head	43
Supervisors' support/guidance	33
Interaction with teachers/students	33
Practical teaching experience	31
Advance notice of supervision visits	18
Being recognized as a teacher (respect/given responsibility)	17
Frequent supervision	9

Table 6

Aspects not liked by students

Aspect	Frequency
Subjective/unfair supervision (intimidation, harsh, criticizing, unfriendliness, not motivating)	21
Lack of school level support (cooperating teacher)	17
Short Teaching Practice duration due to disruption at end	15
Lack of resource support from Mzuni	13
Lack of T/L resources at school	11
Being asked for makeups	10
Supervised by lecturer not in the field	10
Supervised only in one subject	9
Too much work (lesson planning, more periods, etc)	7
Lack of accommodation facilities	7
Late upkeep allowance disbursement	7
Ill behaviour by some teachers (comparing, belittling, underrated)	6

The results presented in Tables 5 and 6 highlight key aspects of the teaching practice experience that student teachers both appreciated and struggled with. On the positive side, student teachers valued the support from school-level teachers and heads, as well as the guidance from their supervisors, which were the most frequently mentioned aspects. The opportunity for practical teaching experience and positive interaction with both teachers and students also emerged as crucial elements of the experience. However, the negative aspects reflect several challenges. Many students disliked subjective or unfair supervision, including experiences of intimidation, harsh criticism, or lack of motivation, and the insufficient support from cooperating teachers in schools. Additional frustrations were related to logistical issues such as short teaching practice duration, lack of resources both at school and from the university, and delays in receiving allowances. The lack of proper supervision in the field and being asked to make up missed sessions were also highlighted as significant stressors. The findings suggest that while the student teachers appreciated the opportunities for learning and support, issues with supervision, resources, and logistical arrangements were barriers to a fully positive teaching practice experience.

Table 7

Ratings of their overall level of satisfaction with teaching practice experience

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	%
Very Satisfactory	48	40.3
Satisfactory	68	57.1
Not Sure	2	1.7
Unsatisfactory	1	0.9
Very Unsatisfactory	0	0
Total	119	100

The results of the study indicate that the clinical teaching practice experience was overwhelmingly positive, with 97.4% of participants expressing satisfaction and only 0.9% not satisfied. The majority of participants highlighted that the teaching practice significantly enhanced their professional competencies by providing real classroom experience, underscoring the value of practical exposure in professional development. A notable portion of participants also emphasized the overall enjoyment and enriching nature of the experience, while others appreciated the structured supervision, with all students receiving at least two supervisory sessions. Support from supervisors and teachers was also a key factor contributing to satisfaction, indicating the importance of guidance and mentorship during the practice. Finally, the positive learning outcomes, as reflected in student performance, further validate the efficacy of the clinical teaching practice in fostering both teaching and learning success. These results suggest that the clinical teaching practice effectively meets its objectives of professional preparation and student development, with strong institutional support and active supervision playing crucial roles.

Suggestions for improving future clinical teaching practice exercises

Table 8

Suggestions for improvement

Suggestion	Frequency
Need for adequate preparation before TP (effective methodology which should include more practice in developing schemes of work and Lesson plans and more practice of teaching in terms of peer teaching and micro-teaching)	20
Lecturers to supervise in their field of specialization or department	17
Special needs be taught before Teaching Practice	16
Provide T/L materials for student teachers	80
Improve objectivity in supervision	90
Adhere to student teaching timetables	110
Improve accommodation arrangements	12
Need for close mentorship/supervision by cooperating teachers (need to effectively train cooperating teachers to assist with mentorship and supervision)	6
Advance communication of supervision visits	56
Ensure equal number of supervisions for each student	60
Supervise both major and minor teaching subjects	90
Extend duration of Teaching Practice	48
Increase number of supervisions (more than 3)	18
Involve head teachers in assessing our performance	10
Space supervisions to allow for reflection/improvement	14
Increase upkeep allowance	2
Timely disbursement of allowances	5

The results of this research highlight key areas for improvement in clinical teaching practice, with particular emphasis on enhancing preparation, supervision, and support structures. The frequency of suggestions reveals that ensuring adequate preparation before teaching practice is a top priority, with a

strong focus on developing lesson planning skills and more opportunities for practice through peer and micro-teaching. Furthermore, respondents emphasize the need for specialization in supervision, with lecturers supervising in their field of expertise, and a preference for specialized instruction in teaching students with special needs. The need for improved teaching and learning materials, more objective supervision, adherence to teaching timetables, and closer mentorship by cooperating teachers were also commonly mentioned. Interestingly, there is a significant demand for more structured and frequent supervision, with calls to increase the number of supervisions and extend the duration of teaching practice. The role of head teachers in the assessment process and better accommodation arrangements also surfaced as areas requiring attention. These findings point to a need for a more comprehensive and supportive framework for clinical teaching practice to ensure effective teacher preparation and professional growth.

CONCLUSION

In addressing the challenges that student teachers face, particularly in their perceived lack of confidence in handling secondary school subjects, it is essential to introduce a double major approach within teacher training programs. This approach would provide student teachers with a deeper and more balanced knowledge base, thus enabling them to feel more confident in their ability to manage both their major and minor subject areas effectively. By structuring courses to align with this dual specialization, student teachers can gain the competence needed to support learners with special educational needs. This alignment should be an integral part of teacher preparation, ensuring that student teachers are not only well-prepared in their content knowledge but also equipped with the skills and strategies to cater to the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities.

Moreover, it is crucial that teacher training institutions and Teaching Practice (TP) schools work collaboratively to establish a common understanding of the duties and responsibilities of cooperating teachers and other support staff. This shared understanding will create a more cohesive and supportive environment for student teachers. Cooperating teachers, who play a pivotal role in the development of pre-service teachers, must be adequately trained to mentor and nurture the student teachers placed under their supervision. Providing them with training ensures that they are not only equipped with the necessary mentoring skills but are also updated on critical pedagogical developments and best practices within the teaching profession. Such training will empower cooperating teachers to guide their student teachers effectively, fostering their professional growth and increasing their self-confidence.

Additionally, all supervisors at teacher training institutions must undergo a comprehensive Teaching Practice orientation. This capacity-building initiative should focus on objective supervision and assessment, ensuring that supervisors are well-versed in the best practices specific to various subject areas. Supervisors should also be equipped to support student teachers in their growth and development throughout the TP period. By incorporating subject-specific pedagogical approaches and strategies into the orientation, supervisors can better assist student teachers in refining their teaching practices and addressing the challenges they may face in the classroom.

In conclusion, several avenues for future research could significantly enhance the effectiveness of teacher training programs and Teaching Practice experiences. Investigating the relationship between student teachers' perceived self-confidence and their performance at the end of the Teaching Practice period would provide valuable insights into how confidence impacts teaching effectiveness and professional development. Additionally, exploring the gaps in students' content knowledge in their minor subjects, as perceived by supervisors, could reveal areas where additional support is needed. A comparison of student feedback from different supervisors, subject content specialists, and methodology experts would further highlight areas of weaknesses and inconsistencies, offering a foundation for targeted capacity building initiatives. Such research would help to refine the

supervision and mentorship process, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective in supporting pre-service teachers in their journey towards becoming competent, confident educators.

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