

TUTORS' LESSON PREPARATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED LITERATURE AT PUBLIC PRIMARY TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Preparation of lessons is an inevitable first step in a school teaching activity because it gives the teacher an opportunity to formulate lesson objectives. Subsequently, the teacher selects the content and determines the learning activities which will lead to the achievement of these objectives. In Kenya, English is taught as a second-language. English is both a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools and a language of instruction for all the other school subjects except Kiswahili at all levels of education in Kenya. It is therefore, a prestigious language and students' prowess in it is highly valued. For this reason, effectiveness on how it is taught is critical both for teachers and policymakers. Literature is used in English language classrooms as a resource for availing students with contextual backgrounds for studying the English language. This also explains why it was introduced in Kenyan primary teacher training colleges in 2006 and integrated into English subject. Whereas many scholars in Kenya have researched on the other factors influencing students' performance in English, very little has been mentioned about the influence of preparation of literature lessons particularly in teacher training colleges. The purpose of this study is therefore, an attempt to fill this gap by investigating the tutor preparation of literature lessons at public Primary Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs) in Kenya. Data for the study was collected by administration of questionnaires to teachers' college's tutors teaching literature, interview of English subject heads and observation of literature lessons. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage and presented in the text. The study concluded that failure by college tutors teaching literature to prepare literature lessons well and prior to teaching bedevils integrated literature implementation. The study recommends regular in-service training of teachers' colleges tutors teaching literature to enlighten them on the learning objectives of literature and equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills in the preparation of literature lessons. Further, the study recommends vibrancy and tutor-administrator collaboration in the monitoring of literature implementation in public PTTCs in Kenya

KEYWORDS: Curriculum Implementation, Lesson Preparation, Literature, Teacher Training Colleges, Tutors,

INTRODUCTION

Lesson preparation is an indispensable step in the implementation of the curriculum because apart from affording the teacher an opportunity to carefully explore, examine and internalize what to teach, it is an informative procedure in lesson-time allocation, collection and preparation of teaching materials and instruments as well as the determination of teaching methodologies. In other words, lesson preparation is the lesson management map to the teacher on what to teach, how to teach and the objectives to achieve. Instructional plans also play a central role in creating effective learning

environments (Clark & Dunn, 1991; Reiser & Dick, 1996; Shaulson, 1983 cited in Koszalka et al., 1999). A successful formal teaching and learning process requires proper selection and arrangement of the teaching items or materials.

The success or failure of any lesson depends on lesson preparation. The duration and effort a teacher employ in exploring, internalizing, comparing, relating and critiquing the content to present to the learners has a great effect on the achievement of lesson objectives. Brown et. al. (1994) stated that no matter how kind, amiable and well-meaning a teacher may be, he or she cannot possibly succeed unless he/she has a thorough knowledge of the subject matter he/she is teaching and good general knowledge. Teacher mastery of the instructional content is the basis on which good lesson planning is founded. Because the rational method of planning requires teachers to set goals, formulate alternatives, predict outcomes, and evaluate the effectiveness of reaching those goals (Lenski & Caskey 2009), thorough knowledge and understanding of what to teach is an invaluable asset to the teacher. A teacher is a learner throughout his/her career as teaching involves an analysis of the teaching content, learning environment, learner behavior and applicable strategies in overcoming the challenges encountered. Teacher lesson preparation is an unmissable opportunity for effective teaching because as Lee and Yatahashi (2011) claim, teachers' preparation in the lesson plan is helpful in determining the teaching goal, considering the existing resources, and designing the learning activities. Fernandez and Yo-shida (2004) add that in lesson planning, the basic problems encountered by students in their daily lives can be used as stimulators for students to achieve the learning goals. Rosenshine et.al (1995) indicated that planning should be the first thing a teacher should do when beginning to teach and meeting a group to teach for the first time, which is also an indicator to achieve educational goals.

Marzano et al., (2003) assert that the teacher is probably the single most important factor affecting student achievement. This is because teachers decide the form and content of their instruction, such as how much presenting, questioning, and discussing to do; how much material to cover in the allotted time; and how in-depth to make their instruction. But the recurrent question has been, what constitutes an effective teacher. For researchers have attempted to answer this question without much success given the various abilities of learners, learning environment and the quality and quantity of learning resources which teachers have to grapple with. Wong (2009) emphasizes on lesson preparation as a definite path towards teaching effectiveness. He defines an effective teacher as one who has positive expectations for student success which should be reflected in the lesson plan, knows how to design lessons for student mastery as evident in the lesson plan and an extremely good classroom manager; which is possible via good time management during class time and that is possible only by effective implementation of a good lesson plan. Lesson plans are effective tools in classroom management as they ensure students are deeply engaged with their work, students know what is expected, there is little wasted time and the climate in the classroom is work-oriented but relaxed and pleasant.

An effective classroom situation demands that the teacher be a monitor and an advisor as opposed to the director of learning. Quist (2000) observes that one of the problems in pupil's learning is teachers, lack of awareness of the barriers to effective teaching. Borich (2007) states that as a combination of lesson objective designing, teaching, modeling, checking for understanding, re-teaching and teacher's self-reflection, the lesson plan is a crucial element in the process of meeting national content standards and optimizing the outcome of classroom teaching and learning. This kind of classroom management is congruent with curriculum objective which wants the students to search for, analyze and critique, and practice every step until they could lean by themselves.

Learner Diversity and Lesson Preparation

Learner difference and diversity have bogged the minds of educators over years with a challenge to modify instruction, learning environment, learning opportunities and access to learning resources so that learning is equitably provided. As suggested by Jackson and Davis (2000) school teachers have to know their students well—who they are and how they learn best—and use this information when planning instruction and assessing student performance. Whole class teaching is highly ineffective, especially when working with heterogeneous students whose diversity hinge on intellectual ability, family backgrounds, pre-school orientations, and gender. Diverse backgrounds of learners influence their grasp of instructional concepts hence the need to anticipate them during the planning of lessons. Differentiated instruction is aimed at leaving no student out in teaching and it is based on the idea that each student has potential and it can be exploited optimally by availing the right learning environment devoid of fear, embarrassment, and discrimination. Rick Wormelli (2007) explains that teachers need to give every student a fighting chance to be not just competent but excellent while finding meaning in the learning as well. Tomlinson and Eidson (2003) refer to the “dual goals of honoring each student’s learning needs and maximizing each student’s learning capacity”. To successfully differentiate instruction, novice teachers are now being instructed how to employ a variety of grouping options, materials, assessment tools, and use classroom space in a flexible manner (Okun, 2012).

Provision of limited learning opportunities by teachers which mostly favor extremely talented students at the expense of less talented ones has been widely blamed for lack of equity in the classrooms. As educators attempting to differentiate instruction, we should all recognize the importance of incorporating opportunities for student choice (Okun, 2012). The advocates of contemporary practices in learning and teaching are strongly opposed to whole class teaching based on the premise that, however homogenous a group of students may appear to be, they have diverse learning needs which ought to be addressed in planning, implementation, and assessment of learning. This resonates with Florian and Black Hawkins’ (2011) principles of inclusive pedagogy which advocates for creation of learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available for everyone; extending what is ordinarily available for all learners rather than using teaching and learning strategies that are suitable for most alongside something ‘additional’ or ‘different’ for some who experience difficulties; and focusing on what is to be taught (and how) rather than who is to learn it”. The characteristic feature of whole class teaching is that everybody is taught the same thing at the same time and at the same speed. The teacher’s heavy workload and expansive syllabus may drive teachers to the practice of whole class teaching. On the contrary, the teacher needs to consider children’s individual differences and avail opportunities to learn from each other for the benefit of all. The enactment of plans that take account of learner differences continues to be very important in contemporary school teaching, touching on questions of personalization and inclusion of pupils with additional needs, including those with special educational needs (Paterson, 2007; Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Olembo et al (2001) have noted that for effective teaching to take place, teachers have to take into consideration the different types of learners in their classrooms, have a variety of learning experiences to cater for the different learning styles, avoid passive learning but should involve learners in the learning process, have relevant and well-presented content catering for the needs of the learners, have conducive learning environment and use adequate and appropriate teaching resources. During the planning of lessons, the teacher ought to put the various learning needs of learners in mind and plan for them. A variety of media is required in the presentation of instructional content for example in order to address this diversity. Whereas lecture method may favor fast learners whose interest is to cover much content within a short time, the teacher needs to incorporate repetition, question – answer, dictated notes and discussion activities in their lesson plans to cater for less talented learners.

Gender parity is so important an issue in the provision of education opportunities that educators have to consider and prepare for it from the onset. Societal traditional perceptions and expectations on male and female trickle down to the differentiated provision of education opportunities between men and women. Subject teacher's awareness of this differentiation and prior plan for it in preparation for teaching will go a long way in bringing equity in the lessons so that male and female student are provided with equal lesson participation platforms. Gender refers to being male or female. Within the gender groups, the people are influenced by societal expectations of how people should behave. In Kenya, the traditional implications of being feminine and masculine are that a feminine should be delicate, shy, motherly, home keeper, quiet and a good listener (Egunza, 2014). Masculine characteristics are seen as being strong, powerful, dominant, courageous and decision makers (Egunza, 2014). This gender disparity is reflected in the classrooms with girls not readily willing to express their opinions and ask questions during the lessons. In the classrooms, boys will always take the lead and dominate all the class sessions with an attitude of superiority, especially in mathematics and sciences. Even boys can intimidate and bully the clever girls. The boys will do most of the talking thus dominating class discussions while girls who are keener to write are doing the listening. An effective teacher should plan, analyze and address this scenario in order to create an enabling learning environment for both. Girls need more time and more patience from the teacher so that their confidence can be built. They especially need confidence developed in subjects considered to be for males such as mathematics and sciences. Similarly, boys may need more time in English comprehension. Teachers can give remedial teaching to both who are weak in certain subjects. An attractive environment in school where boys and girls interact during games debates, study visits and in textbooks where women are drawn to represent doctors, engineers and technicians need to be emphasized. The teacher can praise both girls and boys, give tasks, for example, cleaning to boys and group them to give the girls support and confidence.

Collaborative Lesson Preparation

Collaboration means "working communally with the aim of learning from each other". There is a possibility of perfection if teachers plan their lessons communally especially if they are teaching the same level, students. As they engage in discussions with colleagues, teachers exploit the repertoire of shared experiences developing their professionalism and bolstering their confidence to take charge of learning activities in their classrooms in a more knowledgeable manner. The benefits of collaborative nature in lesson preparation are immense one of which is a provision of a benchmarking process that teachers can use to gauge their own skills. The collaboration includes continuing interactions about effective teaching methods plus observations of one another's classrooms (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). This approach helps teachers to form communities of practice around planning and teaching. In these communities, teachers construct, organize, share, and refine their knowledge of the lesson. It also provides an avenue for teachers with common interests to interact with other professionals with similar interests to solve problems and improve practice. Collaboration also involves Lesson Study, a teacher teaches a lesson as colleagues observe and take note of teacher's approach and learners' response. Teachers using Lesson Study work as a team, either by grade level, subject area or as an interdisciplinary group, to examine an instructional problem and determine how to apply the solution to current teaching goals. As teachers participate in Lesson Study groups, they actively discuss instructional interventions and share knowledge about how students will respond. Culminating from those discussions, teachers produce a lesson plan that is the result of collective wisdom and experience.

A desire for self-evaluation with a view to improving one's teaching practices is an invaluable ingredient and

ought to be the driving force towards effective collaboration among teachers. Friend (2000) points out that teachers themselves perceive collaboration as difficult and abhor the fact that little attention is paid to collaboration during their professional preparation. Teachers are normally prepared to be lone rangers in thought and practice and this explains why they normally flounder whenever they are asked to demonstrate their skills in the classroom (Friend, 2000). Teachers need specific training and practice in knowing “how to work, communicate, and collaborate with colleagues” (McCormick, Noonan, Ogata, & Heck, 2001) Teachers may not have learned this, because the most common practice for teachers is to work in relative isolation (McManus & Kauffman, 1991), and they are used to making decisions alone (Janney, Snell, Beers, & Raynes, 1995). According to Brownell, Yeager, Rennells, and Riley (1997), collaboration among school professionals can be developed and sustained, and positive outcomes are shown both for students and for teachers. Through their review, they determined that there are five fundamental characteristics of effective teacher-teacher collaboration:

- A shared vision for student learning and teaching,
- A common commitment to collaboration,
- Communities of care,
- Frequent, extended, positive interactions between school faculty and leaders, and
- Administrative leadership and powersharing.

From the foregoing, the benefits of teacher collaboration cannot be gainsaid. For collaboration to be meaningful, it must begin at the first step and this is planning of the lesson. At this stage, it is advantageous for the teacher has an opportunity to consult and involve colleagues in the planning of the subject matter, methodologies, learning activities and time allocation for each session for the benefit of the learners. teachers who plan their lessons in a collaborative manner seek to satisfy the intellectual needs of their students and have no problem in accounting for their instructional time.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher preparedness is a vital step in the implementation of any curriculum as it gives the teacher an opportunity to reflect on the subject matter, collect additional information to fill the existing gaps, anticipate classroom challenges and strategize on the effective delivery methodologies. English is a very important subject in Kenyan education system because apart from being a social, business and educational language, it is used as the medium of instruction for all the other subjects from early childhood education to the tertiary level of education except Kiswahili. To inculcate English language skills to learners, teachers ought to be not only qualified but also dutiful in preparation of lessons in order to have ample time for creativity required in the teaching of language. The Government of Kenya (GoK) through Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in collaboration with Inspectorate Department of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) – State Department of Basic Education reminds teachers that they ought to dutifully prepare their lessons before teaching. Literature is not taught as a separate subject in Primary Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs) in Kenya. Rather it is integrated into Primary Teacher Education (PTE) English curriculum to facilitate Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) of English. Towards this achievement, preparation of lessons by teacher trainer is critical. Whereas massive research has been done on the levels of teacher lesson preparation at primary and secondary schools in Kenya, little is

mentioned about tutors in public PTTCs on this vital professional responsibility, hence the essence of this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Determine tutors preparation of professional documents like schemes of work, lesson plans, and records of work
- Investigate whether tutors' read literary texts prior to the lessons
- Examine the challenges affecting tutors' preparation of literature lessons

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was the evaluation study design. This design is used in research when the aim is to determine whether the program achieved the goals. Data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative techniques. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select respondents. Using Proportionate Stratified Random sampling technique, the study randomly sampled 16 teacher training colleges for study which provided 16 Heads of Subject - English and 52 teacher trainers teaching Literature. Questionnaires, interview schedules and lesson observation schedules were used to collect data from the target participants. A questionnaire was preferred for teacher trainers teaching Literature because it can be used to collect data simultaneously from several respondents within a short period of time. It also gave the respondents ample time to consider the questions and give accurate responses. An interview schedule was used for heads of subject English to afford the researcher an opportunity to probe more information from the respondents regarding the topic under study. Data was analyzed and presented using descriptive statistics of percentages.

Study Findings

The study found that all the 52 tutors who participated in the study had their schemes of work prepared by their Heads of Subject (HoSs) English. Schemes of work comprised of the subject topics and sub-topics to be taught in the term, the objectives to be achieved, class learning activities to lead to the achievement of the set objectives as well as the learning and teaching resources to be deployed. Asked why they preferred to scheme lessons for tutors as opposed to the latter scheming their own lessons, a majority of HoSs English said that individual scheming was unnecessary as the same content was being taught in the term by all tutors. They also said the practice saved time and helped avert a confrontation with their slow or reluctant colleagues in preparing professional documents. Teachers ought to personally prepare their lessons because the rational method of planning requires teachers to set their own goals, formulate alternatives, predict outcomes, and evaluate the effectiveness of reaching those goals (Lenski & Caskey 2009). Having someone else come up with the subject matter to teach at what time, the class activities to utilize and the learning resources to deploy is off hand practice by teachers and only lead to ineffectiveness in curriculum implementation. As to whether or not HoSs English checked their colleagues' designing and documentation of lesson plans as well as the filing of work records, it was found that they had no definite way of ascertaining these practices. They majorly relied on the goodwill of their colleagues and hoped that the latter's affirmative responses during subject meetings on whether they designed documented and filed their work records were actually true. Having their lessons schemed by someone else and negligence of record keeping is professional malpractice by tutors in teachers' colleges. Best practices the world over demand that teachers design, organize, implement and evaluate their own lessons because teaching is essentially a personal endeavor. To bring about the envisaged outcomes from the learners, teachers should have a personal grip of their own lessons from preparation to evaluation so that they can be at a position to relate the levels of learning in their classrooms with the subject matter and

the methodologies they deploy. This holistic personal experience will influence their future decisions on remedial teaching and the teaching of related subject matter.

The reading of literary texts by tutors prior to literature lessons at public PTTCs in Kenya was found to be haphazard. Of the 52 tutors surveyed, 24 (46.2%) submitted that they don't read lesson areas of literary texts such as poems, novels, plays, and short stories before going for the lessons. They said that they would rather read them with the students in their classrooms. However, of the same tutors, 37 (71.2%) said that reading literary texts with students in the classroom is a slow process, tedious and boring. They said that as much as they would like to read these texts with students, time allocated for each lesson was too little compared to the content to be covered before the students are presented for national examination. Majority of HoSs English revealed that many of the tutors preferred to assign students reading areas especially for voluminous texts like novels. Such tutors then assume the role of a lecturer during the lesson and expose the literary material they hope (just hope) that students read on their own. This distorts the role of literature in a English as Second Language (ESL) classroom, the Kenyan case. The advantage of literature in an ESL context is to provide contextual grounds upon which various concepts of language can be learned. Research has shown that the mere definition of words using the dictionary does not enable students to fully understand words and knowledgeably transfer them to their speech and writing (Rhoder & Huerster, 2002). This is where teacher's intervention becomes crucial. The voice of the teacher when reading any educational material is very important especially when that material is presented in a figurative form. Literature especially poems are termed as complex because they are presented in a language which requires piecing together various concepts in the text to understand the subject matter and the poet's storyline. Prowess in this ability requires wide experience with literature and that is where the teacher comes in. Failure to read and analyze literary texts prior to using them to teach the students or worse, leaving students on their own to read them is complex as it is frustrating.

Tutors and HoSs English at public PTTCs in Kenya identified challenges which affect their preparation of literature lessons. Inadequate training of tutors on literature implementation topped with 63.6% of tutors identifying it as a literature lessons' preparation challenge. Insufficient literature resource books (54.5%) followed with tutors' non-commitment to planning (45.5%) coming third. Training of teachers refreshes and broadens their knowledge on the subject matter and effectively sophisticates all their professional practices including lessons preparation. According to Rice (2003) training empowers teachers to bridge the gap between the learner's world and the curriculum making the latter relevant and reliable in solving the problems faced by the learner. In the same vein, availability of learning resources can be a determining factor on how far the teacher can go in lesson preparation. Further, no other factor can work wonders in teacher lesson preparation like personal commitment. It enables teachers to find the meaning of work even in the most difficult situations and effectively overcome the many challenges associated with teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that tutor preparation of professional records necessary for implementing integrated literature at public PTTCs in Kenya is piecemeal. Tutors' ought to take personal responsibility on their lessons from preparation to evaluation. Tutors prior reading of literary texts as well as reading them with students in the class was found to be lacking which greatly distorts the worth of literature in Kenyan English classrooms. Further, it complicates literature for students hence demotivating them. Inadequate on-the-job training for tutors, insufficient learning materials as well as non-

commitment of tutors in the preparation of literature lessons jeopardizes the teaching of integrated literature from the onset. Tutors greatly feel under-equipped and non-commitment reduces them to mechanical implementers of the curriculum. To achieve the intended goals in the teaching of integrated literature in Kenyan public PTTCs, these problems must be adequately addressed.

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