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The state of student-teachers' support service rendered from cooperative teachers as school-based practitioners: The Case of Bahir Dar University, Amhara Region, Ethiopia

Solomon Melesse

Bahir Dar University and PhD candidate at Addis Ababa University.

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This study investigated the type and level of desired and actual help given to student-teachers from the respective cooperative teachers. The areas help was desired by student-teachers include teaching the curriculum subjects, classroom management, and feedback on their teaching and school environment information. The study was carried out on education faculty student-teachers from 2007-2008 of Bahir Dar University. 107 students were randomly selected from a total of 680. Of these, 50 were females and 57 were males. Questionnaires solicit information from student-teachers about the desired and actual help provided from school based practitioners. The actual help provided was below the level of student-teachers desired help from the same. This paper suggests ways of improving the roles and status of cooperative teachers to become strong partners in teacher education programs.

Key words: Cooperative teachers, student-teachers, practicum, school-university partnership, teacher educators, teacher education program.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Practical experience has always been part of teacher education program. Most teachers are educated in a form of partnership between schools and TEIs. During this time, they stay in school observing an experienced teacher. Practicum was practiced very little when the most common approach to teacher education was the applied science model. In this approach, teaching was studied theoretically, and students were expected to master teaching by gradually putting the theory into prac-tice. More recently, however, the reflective model is widely used, and a large part of teacher education takes place in schools. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own experience, are supported in the process, and learn as reflective practitioners (Schon, 1983).

Teacher education is less commonly viewed as a pure applied science (Eisner, 2002). Many teacher education programs combine the applied science and the reflective approach. In the UK, for instance, a large part of teacher education programs take place in schools, and in the US partnerships between teacher education institutions and professional development schools are common (Alexander and Galbraith, 1997). The reflective approach has become the mainstream in Scandinavian teacher education programs. In the Netherlands, however, Korthagen et al. (2001) advocate the realistic approach to teacher education where prospective teachers are put into schools and start a non-threatening practicum from the very beginning of the program, and they are carefully guided in their reflection on practical experiences which aim at developing a set of competencies necessary for

E-mail: slmnntsnt@yahoo.com.

teaching.

It is reported by student-teachers and teacher educators that practicum is one of the most useful components of the teacher education program (Tisher, 1990). Educators and researchers in the field also share this view. For example, Alexander and Galbraith (1997) note that "teaching realities gained from experience in the school universally proclaimed as essential elements in teacher training" (p., 18). Ramsey (2000, p. 58) noted the value of "placing professional experience and related learning at the centre of teacher education." According to Tisher (1990), "student-teachers believe that the practical experience of observing expert teachers, receiving feedback, and practicing strategies are the most important factors in their growth as teachers" (p., 76). The benefits of providing practicum in teacher education and the hands on nature of practicum in a situated practice field require teacher education institutions to make the practicum a meaningful experience. Practicum is a period in which student-teachers are attempting to put into practice the many theories and skills that they have been exposed to in teacher education program. It could also be a period of anxiety and adjustment for student-teachers. They need some close observation, monitoring and support at this level. The literature indicated that there is great recognition of the contribution practitioners in schools can make towards student-teachers' education and development (Sandholtz and Finan, 1998). This has given rise to a variety of school-university partnerships in teacher education (Brandy, 2000).

Despite strong criticisms on the conventional teacher dominated and theory based approach, the teaching learning process in most schools in Ethiopia is still teacher dominated, theoretical and a secret activity only for a teacher and the respective class students (MoE, 2003). In most classes, students listen to teachers' speech and copy notes from the blackboard. Learning by doing, problem solving, cooperative learning and group approaches are rarely used and when used, not aligned to the instructional purpose. Literature shows that learning is not a transfer of information from teacher to students, but results from real engagement of learners in the process of teaching and learning.

The Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program III (ESDP III, 2005) underlines that the education system faces serious problems pertaining to teacher qualification, shortage of textbooks, and high student-teacher ratio. The dropout rate has been high. The retention rate at grade 5 is only about 55 per cent. The gender gap is 18% favoring boys (Education Sector Development Pro-gram of Ethiopia, ESDP III, 2005). Moreover, research findings (Pauline et al., 1997; Women's Affairs Depart-ment, 2000 (both cited in MoE Task Force, 2007)) indicated lower participation of girls in class activities. Studies also indicate that teachers do not encourage girls' participation in their classes (MoE, 2003). These situations have led to a serious concern among educators and the ministry of education about quality of education. This adds to the need to bring paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered instructional strategies in the whole educational system. At which educational level to start the shift remains somehow difficult to determine. Educators like Amare (2009) agree, the shift needs to start in teacher education programs. This researcher believes that students in this program are prospective teachers, and a shift at this level can accelerate the intended change.

In general, to minimize the above bottle necks of the education system, the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia in its Education Sector Development Program III (ESDP III 2005) document indicated the following main points as part of quality enhancement endeavors:

1. In the School Improvement Program, among the major focus areas, emphasis will be given to student-centered learning, professional development and collaboration and quality of instructional program.
2. Improvising teachers' professional capability through continuous professional development.
3. Strengthening cluster based local in-service training, which mainly focus on active learning methodology and action research.
4. Strengthening in-school-supervision so that experienced, skilled and innovative teachers can share their experiences and coach the inexperienced teachers. It further indicates that the content of pre-service and in-service teacher training programs will be revised to enable teachers acquire and develop appropriate pedagogical skills that are academically sound, child friendly, and gender sensitive together with individual life skills which takes into account the current HIV crises in the nation.

The focus of the current study is to examine student teachers' desired help expected from school teachers and the actual help rendered from them to student teachers.

Statement of the problem

Educational institutions are being urged to prepare students to meet the challenges of a swiftly changing global world. Schools are required to respond to these changes by changing the way they have historically operated in designing and implementing innovations for the teaching learning process. The changes involve philosophical perspectives and actual classroom practice. Realizing changes in relation to professional development is highly demanding, and considers the collaborative endeavor between higher education institutions and the respective schools.

Studies suggest that there has been no recognition of the importance of professional development before the dawn of the new millennium (Fullan and Hargreaves,

1996). Nowadays, however, several educators have identified the professional development of teachers as a major component of school reform. Professional development is critical to systemic educational reform and school improvement. Guskey (1986) says that the purpose of professional development is to bring about changes in the beliefs, attitudes, and classroom practices of teachers with the ultimate goal being changes in student outcomes.

The researcher's experience as teacher educator and frequent discussions with student-teachers who were the researcher's advisees both during their school attachment and at Bahir Dar University underscores that cooperative teachers did not support student-teachers in the schools. Even cooperative teachers existence did not guarantee close supervision of student-teachers practical attachment activities. Though the researcher went to different partner schools for 12 times for student-teachers' supervision, there was no opportunity to observe and discuss student-teachers actual teaching and other activities with school based cooperative teachers. Cooperative teachers were not available at the respective schools during the researcher's school supervision. This instigated the researcher to examine student teachers desired areas of help and the actual help provided from cooperative teachers.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study include:

1. Identify the basic aspects of help student-teachers expect from school-based cooperative teachers
2. Examine the extent of student teachers' desired help from cooperative teachers while they are in the respective schools
3. Examine the extent to which cooperative teachers provide actual help to student-teachers while they are in the respective schools
4. Check whether there is significant difference between the help student-teachers desire from cooperative teachers and the actual help they get.

Research questions

The researcher assesses the problem with the following leading questions:

1. What are the basic areas of help expected of student-teachers from school based cooperative teachers to properly induce into school practices?
2. How much help do student-teachers desire from cooperative teachers?
3. To what extent do cooperative teachers provide the support student-teachers desire in schools?
4. Is there a significant difference between the help student-teachers desire from cooperative teachers and the actual help student-teachers gain?

Significance of the study

School practical experience is an essential experience to fill-in pedagogical gaps of student teachers. It is believed to provide student-teachers with a practical experience. The successful implementation of any training for student-teachers largely depends on the extent to which it considers their needs and concerns for the kind of training they want to take (Solomon and Alemayehu, 2007). Hence, the results from this study help Bahir Dar University and other Higher Learning Institutes adjust school-university partnership based on the feedback obtained in this study. It also helps cooperative teachers gauge the support they provide vis-à-vis the support they are required to provide to student-teachers who come for practical experience in their schools.

Definition of important terms

Cooperative teachers: refers to school-based teachers who are assigned to provide support service to student-teachers in their school-based practical experience.
Student-teachers: refers to Higher Learning Institute senior students who went out to the respective schools to acquaint themselves with school-based practical experiences.
Mentors: refers to specially trained cooperative teachers who therefore provide efficient and effective support service to student-teachers who went out to the respective schools to acquaint themselves with school-based practical experience.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In this section, the researcher discusses the general concept of mentoring and the state of its implementation as discussed in the national and international literature. In addition, an attempt is made to explain the definition, uses and application of practical experience at schools. Lastly, a review of issues related to school-based cooperative teachers and their contribution for the realization of the intentions of Higher Learning Institutes is made.

What is mentoring?

The Office of Education Research (OER, 1993) describes mentoring as 'a sustained relationship between a youth

and an adult' (p., 1). Within teacher education, mentoring is often referred to as a journey (Awaya et al., 2003) and as a process of collaborative work (Gehrke and Kay, 1984; Feiman-Nemser, 1998). Thus, mentoring can be seen as comprising an important duality; it is both a relationship and a process. In either case, it must involve at least two parties, the mentor and the mentee. The mentor is normally an experienced teacher who takes up the responsibility of closely supervising a mentee when s/he does the practicum in the respective school. This duality of relationship and process is somewhat similar to the two aspects of mentoring suggested by Flaxman et al. (1988) cited in Lucas, (2001) namely, 'natural' and 'planned' mentoring (p., 25). Natural mentoring occurs through friendship, collegiality, teaching, coaching and counseling. In contrast, planned mentoring occurs through structured programs in which mentors and participants are selected and matched with a purpose and intention through formal processes. However, while this description suggests something of a dichotomy, the duality of process and relationship suggests a concept of mentoring that is more closely interconnected. Thus, while the process aspect aims to induct the student-teacher into the community of practice of the teaching profession (Wenger, 1998), the relationship aspect enables this to be done in a caring and supportive manner. As Clawson (1996) states, 'mentoring includes teaching but goes beyond the mere transfer of knowledge and skill, to include technical, organizational and career/personal life issues' (p., 9).

However, much of the discourse on mentoring is focused on the 'end result' in terms of what is achieved for the student-teacher. For example, Lucas (2001) sees it as a means to help novice members develop professional skills, whilst Chovanece (1998) suggests that mentoring is about promoting self-directedness in the learner, enabling new professionals to work independently. The emphasis is on how a student-teacher achieves professional development and personal growth by learning from the mentor. By contrast, relatively little emphasis has been placed on the mentors themselves, particularly in relation to their own development and the construction of their own identities (Wenger, 1998) vis-à-vis the mentoring process. Often the emphasis is on the constraints and barriers that a mentor has to confront such as whether the school backup can create a culture of support and collaborative relationships with other non-mentoring colleagues to provide an affirmative environment (Hoerner et al., 1991; McCann and Radford, 1993). Such constraints inevitably have an impact on the way mentors perceive their role in the mentoring process.

A large number of studies have attempted to identify and describe the role that mentors play. Schon (1983) highlighted the importance of mentors being a 'critical friend' to the mentees, helping them towards meaningful reflection on practice. This is echoed by Braund (2001) who concludes that 'the mentors' role has been assumed to be one of "reflective practitioner" who is able to unpack issues of pedagogy with the student-teachers so that to enable them to critically evaluate children's learning and design subsequent teaching (p., 198).

Hopper (2001) describes a mentor as an equal partner working with the student-teacher and distinguishes this from a mere observer of what the student-teacher does in his or her teaching. Although Hopper's paper was about the role of the Higher Learning Institute tutor, his notion of equal partner is clearly meant to apply to mentoring in general. Thus, an equal partner is the one who can use:

…a wide range of strategies in which mentoring can be managed and exploited with in a teaching context such as shared practices, collaborative teaching and co-analysis of lessons (with the trainee) which goes beyond the simplistic 'sitting with Nellie' scenario (Hopper, 2001, p., 216).

On the other hand, effective observation is still essential and in order to perform these roles (equal partner and observer) utmost. Hopper states that 'mentors need to support and encourage their trainees, listen to them, empathize, evaluate and reflect with them, organize, be flexible and approachable and offer time and commitment to trainees' (Hopper, 2001, p., 216). To achieve all these, Hopper argues that mentors need to embrace the characteristics of other roles such as being a counselor, a critical friend, a role model, an advisor, a quality controller and an assessor. But, do mentors/ cooperative teachers in the Ethiopian education system fulfill all the mentioned qualities? That requires further investigation into the school-university partnership practice in Ethiopian education system.

Cooperative teachers at schools

Zimper and Sherril (1996) pointed out that the most common form of practitioner involvement in teacher education programs has been through the utilization of cooperative teachers during the last few decades (p., 291). They are mainly experienced classroom practitioners assigned to take a student-teacher under their wing for an extended period of time. The tripartite relationship among the classroom teachers, student-teachers and university educators has become the usual mode of operation in administering the practicum in the educational arena (Zimpher and Howey, 1992). However, criteria used to select cooperating teachers have often been minimal and those selected receiving minimal recognition for their effort (Zimpher and Howey, 1992). Very little staff development has been put in place of cooperative teachers by the institutions involved (Goodman, 1988). In spite of some problems inherent in the cooperative teachers role, Zimpher and Sherril (1996) emphasis that the new conception of how one learns to teach through linking the learning of student-teachers with the experience of practicing teachers and teacher

educators requires a strong school-university collaboration in initial professional development of student-teachers (p., 291).

In a survey done in the United States (RATE IV, 1990), the profile of cooperative teachers showed that on the average, they had 16 years teaching experience, worked in the same school for 12 years or more and their average age is 43 years, most of them hold a master's degree or advance diploma in education, more than 77% reported that they are more than adequately prepared in terms of knowledge of effective teaching, classroom observation skills, hold conference with student-teachers, and provide feedback on performance. Survey responses also confirmed that they were committed to their role in teacher preparation, that they view their role and their student-teacher experience as the most important part of the teacher education process. In the same survey, however, only about one third of the cooperative teachers reported that they were involved in any kind of professional development program related to preparation for their role. A similar impact assessment survey made by BDU staff confirmed the fact that cooperative teachers fail to fit the minimum criteria used to be a mentor (Dereje, 2007). In relation to this point, Zimpher and Sherril (1996) reported that typically cooperative teachers received materials and handbooks on their role in the student teaching enterprise and they participated in some initial meetings related to their school-based supervision without having been exposed to what they lack. But the international literature as well as in-house studies confirmed that cooperative teachers concerns need to be identified first to provide actual need based training to these teachers (Solomon and Alemayehu, 2007). The situation is highly exaggerated in our schools for the fact that cooperative teachers are assigned without considering the listed criteria from the literature (personal communication with the practicum coordinator at BDU, 2010).

McIntyre et al. (1996) in reviewing the roles of cooperative teachers came to the conclusion that they can greatly influence the student-teacher's teaching context and their behavior and beliefs in both positive and negative terms. One cannot, therefore, assume that all practitioners have the qualities and temperament to help advance the development of student-teachers professionally through mentor leadership. In fact research often depicts the influence of a cooperative teacher on the student-teacher in negative terms (Guyton and McIntyre, 1990; Winitsky et al., 1992). An impact assessment made on the implementation of practicum in our educational system also confirms the same result. That is, cooperative teachers assigned to assist student-teachers failed to provide the required support to student-teachers (Dereje, 2007). From the current literature, two important aspects should be considered regarding cooperative teachers' role: the behaviors they exhibit or model; and the process and content of feedback they provide to the student-teachers. The most effective cooperative teachers provide clear, specific, and informative feedback to their student-teachers, provide rationales for suggestions given and exhibit self reflection (McIntyre et al., 1996).

The school practicum experience

The existing literature shows the presence of three different models of involving the schools in pre-service teacher education programs. According to Whiting et al. (1996), the most common model is the integrative model. In this model, the student-teacher's experience in the teacher education institute is integrated with the school jurisdiction's context. University educators play the more influential role in the teaching, mentoring and the assessment of student-teachers with minimal formal input from the school practitioners in the planning and provision of training. In a sense, the schools allow the Teacher Education Institutes, (hence forth TEIs) to use their classrooms for student-teachers' teaching experience. The role given to them is only of an advisory nature and they are not involved in the assessment process. This is what happened in the existing Ethiopian education system, too (Dereje, 2007). The model is somehow similar to practicum implementation strategies accepted for use for the last few years in the Ethiopian education system.

The second model is the 'partnership model' (Bullough et al., 1997). In this model, the teacher education courses are planned and run on the basis of a partnership between the TEIs and the respective schools. However, Teitel (1998) indicates that in practice, this is often difficult to attain due to differences in cultures and distinctiveness of teacher education institutes and schools. To accommodate these differences, TEIs resort to developing working partnerships with distinct responsibilities for the schools (Bullough et al., 1997).

The third model is the Community of Teachers model (Stein et al., 1998). In this model, the student-teachers are immersed in the school system. They proceed through their coursework and school experience together at schools. The underlying premise in this model is that prospective teachers need experience in collaborative learning communities in which they are afforded the freedom to experiment with alternative approaches and strategies with the support of their peers. A number of such experiments are currently underway in the affluent countries to transform existing teacher education programs' context into communities of learners that link the learning of student-teachers with the learning of experienced teachers and teacher educators (Barab et al., 2000). Even though this model creates plenty of opportunities for student-teachers to learn from the horse's mouth, it is far from the current actual practice in the Ethiopian educational system (personal communication with the practicum coordinator at BDU, 2010).

To practice the last two models, there should be experimental schools under the universities jurisdiction, and common understanding between teacher educators and school practitioners ought to be created. Otherwise its implementation becomes unrealistic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Research design

The researcher employed descriptive survey research design. An attempt was made to describe the help in teaching the curriculum subjects, in classroom management, in providing relevant information that enables them to function well in the school environment, and in evaluating and providing feedback on their teaching.

Participants

This study was carried out with third year students from the 2007-2008 cohort of BDU, the then Education Faculty. These student-teachers had varied academic background in terms of their areas of specialization or teaching subjects from the social sciences, natural sciences, pedagogical sciences and mathematics. 107 graduating class students were randomly selected from a total of 680 students. Of these, 50 were females and 57 were males.

Development of questionnaire

Areas of help student-teachers received from cooperative teachers were first solicited from 10 arbitrarily selected student-teachers of the same cohort. Of these, provisions from cooperative teachers when student-teachers go out for practicum into schools were short listed. The twenty most commonly cited areas of support were selected with some modifications made on the basis of the experience gained from the literature and consulting colleagues coordinating the practicum at BDU. These twenty items were used to develop the survey questionnaire. Appendix A displays the twenty most desired areas of help nominated by the student-teachers in the open-ended questionnaire. The areas in which help is desired by student-teachers fall into four broad areas such as teaching the curriculum subjects, classroom management, functioning well in the school environment and evaluation of their teaching and feedback.

Before the questionnaire was administered, it was given to two BDU teachers having exposure to the practicum to obtain some suggestions about the validity and inclusiveness of the contents of the instrument. As part of the pilot, and to increase the reliability of the instrument the questionnaire was administered to 10 student-teachers. Subjects were selected arbitrarily as the purpose at this stage was to know the existing state of the instrument. With all these attempts, the researcher confirmed that all the questions endorsed in the questionnaire were found to be useful for the purpose intended, except for some minor modifications made thereof. The reliability level of the questionnaire was 0.82 using Cronbach alpha and SPSS 17.0.

Data collection and analysis procedures

The questionnaire was administered before and after student-teachers went to the respective schools for the practicum to get informed about the expected and actual help provision from cooperative teachers. The pre-practicum questionnaire required the student-teachers to indicate the extent of desired help in each of the twenty selected areas on a four-point scale, which ranges from strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). Whenever they disagree with what is stated, they are asked to state their reasons of disagreement. Student-teachers were invited to complete the pre-practicum questionnaire during the orientation before they went out for the practicum. The post-practicum questionnaire was transmitted to the same student-teachers through the respective teacher educators who went out for observation during the last week of the practicum at the respective schools. They were requested to indicate on a four-point scale the level of help provided by their cooperative teachers in each of the twenty selected areas. The cooperative teachers were not informed about this survey so as not to influence them in any way.

Finally, 103 usable sets of data from 54 male and 49 female students were collected. The data obtained were calculated using the mean score of the response alternatives as a cut-off point. The observed mean score was compared with the expected mean score of 2.5. If the observed mean score is below 2.5, it means that there was disagreement and if above 2.5 there was agreement. Moreover, to see whether the difference between the desired help required from student-teachers to the expected mean score of 2.5 was significant, a one sample t-test analysis was used. The paired samples t-test analysis was also used to see whether there was a significant difference between desired and actual help provided to student-teachers from cooperative teachers. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Important areas of help

Main areas which student teachers required to get assistance from cooperative teachers were solicited from student teachers themselves. Evidence was obtained from ten arbitrarily selected student-teachers through an open ended questionnaire that requires them to list important areas of help required from cooperative teachers. All the important areas of help at schools can be categorized into four basic pedagogical aspects, such as help in teaching the curriculum subjects, help in classroom management, help in providing relevant information that enable them to function well in the school environment, and help in evaluating and providing feedback on their teaching. These categories have detail contents that indicate the specific areas of help required from cooperative teachers to student-teachers (see Appendix A/B).

Student-teachers' desired and actual help rendered from cooperative teachers

Here the researcher tried to check how far the desired areas of help and the actual help provisions of cooperative teachers deviate from the expected mean score (2.5). The study also attempted to see the difference that exists between the kind of help desired by student-teachers and cooperative teachers assistance provided when student teachers went to the respective schools for practical experience.

Table 1. One-sample t-test analysis of areas of desired help rendered from cooperative teachers, as reported by student-teachers.

	Test value = 2.5					
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Desired help	17.435	19	.000	1.2150	1.069	1.361

Table 2. One sample t-test analysis of actual help provided from cooperative teachers, as reported by student-teachers.

	Test value = 2.5					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Actual Help	-3.054	19	.007	-.3200	-.539	-.101

Table 3. Paired samples t-test analysis of desired and actual help rendered from cooperative teachers.

		Paired differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Actual help - desired help	-1.5350	.5214	.1166	-1.7790	-1.2910	-13.166	19	.000

Appendix A/B disclosed that all the twenty (20) areas nominated by student-teachers as areas where they would desire help were considered important. As could be seen in Table 1, the mean score difference between desired help and the expected mean score is 1.2150. One sample t-test analysis indicated that t-calculated (17.435) lies outside the 95% confidence interval of the difference (1.069_1.361). The t-critical at 19 df is 2.093. Therefore, student-teachers desired areas of help to be rendered from cooperative teachers has significant difference from the expected mean score at $\alpha = 0.05$ level. It can be understood from this analysis that student-teachers exhibit a very strong desire of help in the four broad areas of instruction, such as help in teaching the curriculum subjects, help in classroom management, help in providing relevant information that enable them to function well in the school environment, and help in evaluating and providing feedback on their teaching.

Table 2 shows that all the twenty (20) areas nominated by student-teachers as areas where they would desire help from cooperative teachers were not as per the expectation. As indicated in Table 2, the mean score difference between actual help rendered from cooperative teachers and the expected mean score is -0.32. One sample t-test analysis indicated that t-calculated (-3.054) lies outside the 95% confidence interval of the difference (-0.539_-0.101). The t-critical at 19 df is 2.093. Therefore, the mean score for the actual areas of help rendered from cooperative teachers as reported by student-teachers has significant difference from the expected mean score at $\alpha = 0.05$ level. Here, the negative sign indicates that the expected mean score is greater than the actual help provided by cooperative teachers found in secondary schools. The results imply that student-teachers gains of actual help from co-operative teachers vis-à-vis the four broad areas of instruction, such as help in teaching the curriculum subjects, help in classroom management, help in functional information in the school environment, and help in evaluating and providing feedback on their teaching, are below the required assistance expected of the co-operative teachers.

An attempt was made to see the difference that exists between the actual and desired helps from cooperative teachers to student teachers. Paired samples t-test analysis was employed to check this. Table 3 showed that the mean difference between actual help and desired help to be provided from cooperative teachers is -1.5350. In addition, the paired samples t-test analysis indicates that the calculated t-test (-13.166) is far from 95% confidence interval of the difference (-1.7790_-1.2910). The paired samples t-test critical value at 19 df is 1.729. Thus, there is significant difference between desired and actual help provisions for student-teachers from

cooperative teachers of the respective secondary schools in Ethiopia in the four basic areas of instruction at $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Desired areas of help, as reported by student-teachers

The areas in which help was considered important by 98% of the student teachers (refer Appendix A) include evaluation feedback on their teaching, teaching the subject content effectively, functioning well in school environment, and classroom management. These findings indicate the first concern of student-teachers to get assistance on instructional components they nominated important. There is input related to these areas in curriculum studies and Education courses in the teacher education program. Besides, these are areas practical in nature and can be best experienced at the school setting. The teachers in the schools are in the best position to be mentors and guides to student-teachers in the real world context.

Cooperative teachers are also the best source of information about the school and students for the student-teacher to integrate into the school culture and function effectively in the respective school. The amount of space given to student-teachers to experiment also depends on cooperative teachers' belief about teaching. Some cooperative teachers require the student teachers to conform to their way of doing things and it has a negative effect on their growth.

Even though some studies showed lower level of importance to areas related to general techniques of teaching (Barab et al., 2000), this finding however depicted more importance to this aspect. These issues (teaching the curriculum subjects, classroom management, and feedback on their teaching and school environment information) have been discussed in the on-campus courses. Techniques of motivation, catering for individual differences, pacing of lesson, time management and other issues related to teaching are discussed at length in the teacher education courses. The findings confirmed that student-teachers still need to see these skills modeled and practice them in the actual classroom contexts.

Cooperative teachers' actual help, as reported by student-teachers

From the perspective of student-teachers, many cooperative teachers seem to have not sufficiently adjusted to accommodate the added responsibilities of supporting student-teacher. Perhaps they are not clear about their roles in the partnership model in teacher education. Some of these problems may also rest with the lack of clear communication between the university and the schools (Dereje, 2007). The researcher's eleven years of experience as teacher educator showed that the typical communication process between the university and the schools tend to be one of division of labor in the teacher education process rather than being a collaborative process. The teacher education institute does its part and the schools do their share. Currently, in BDU the Community based Practical Education (COPE) co-ordinator administers the practicum and briefs the school coordinating teachers once a year. The coordinator briefs the cooperative teachers in the school on their expected role. University educators also make a visit to the school to talk to the principal and cooperative teachers. There is limited communication between the cooperative teachers and the university supervisor who mentor the student-teachers, some teacher educators did not even try to get cooperative teachers at all, and most cooperative teachers were absent from school when teacher educators went to schools for supervision (Dereje, 2007).

The level of help provided by cooperative teachers in the areas surveyed in this study seems to fall short of the expectations of the student-teachers. Even in the evaluation and feedback on teaching, which is the core task of supervision, no student-teachers reported that they received sufficient help. Other areas such as providing help in teaching curriculum subjects, classroom management and motivation skills, and information about the school rules and procedures were rated much less favorably by the student-teachers. The reasons for this may be many. Cooperative teachers' are often more busy with their own work commitments and do not have much time for supporting the student-teachers. The fault may also lie on student-teachers who do not make use of the opportunities to consult their cooperative teachers. Informal talks with COPE coordinator confirmed that there exists lack of rapport between the cooperative teachers and student-teachers, and that the student-teachers are reluctant to approach their cooperative teachers for help (personal communication with COPE coordinator, 2010). Further study would be needed to confirm or disconfirm the findings. Generally, all these need to be looked into to make the partnership paradigm effective.

RECOMMENDATION

Teacher leadership in school-university collaboration is the corner stone in reforms advocating partnership model of teacher preparation. Therefore, for the successful operation of the school-university partnership model, specific role definition for TEIs, schools, TEI educators and cooperative teachers need to be specified. We all should need teachers who are confident in their teaching

and who are aware of the paradigm shift in the field of education to provide the vision and the know-how for preparing a new breed of teachers for the changing social and economic environment in Ethiopia. Therefore, the assumption that any teacher who is effective with students in the class has the capacity to be successful cooperative teacher cannot be taken as the only criterion for selecting support providing teachers. It is important to establish some selection criteria that reflect local definition of teacher expertise, evidence of commitment to supporting student teachers and personal qualities that reveal self-confidence, interpersonal skills and empathy in relationship with others.

It is not only important to identify potential cooperative teachers but also be aware of student-teachers' expectations. To play an effective role in the teacher education program, it is also essential that cooperative teachers acquire the necessary knowledge and skills and a positive attitude towards their role as partners in teacher education. There is a need for a professional development unit in the practicum department in institutes of teacher education. The main mission of this unit could be to help cooperative teachers to construct their knowledge and understanding of teaching and develop skills to support and guide prospective teachers. The areas identified by student-teachers as important in this study could form the focal issues for dialogue and discussion between cooperative teachers and teacher educators who are members of the practicum coordinating unit. But it must be remembered that teachers resist top down approach to professional development (Solomon and Alemayehu, 2007; Seyoum, 1996). It is, therefore, important to create an environment that truly engages school teachers and teacher educators as members of the coordinating unit to exchange views in a collaborative context as equals.

Little or no recognition offered by the university for the school teachers may be another reason for cooperative teachers' lack of enthusiasm towards supporting teacher education programs (informal talks with some cooperative school principals, 2008). The RATE IV (1990) also showed that cooperating teachers perceived that they are consulted rarely by the higher education colleagues. Perhaps this lack of equitable treatment as true members of the teacher education team causes low morale among cooperative teachers (RATE IV, 1990). This is also true in the case of BDU (personal communication with COPE coordinator in BDU, 2009). Therefore, the selection of an organizing title and role definition that reflects some direct form of university affiliation for cooperative teachers as suggested by Zimpher and Sherrill (1996) will be of some help. Hence, MoE should design mechanisms by which cooperative teachers get an opportunity to work as TEI based teacher educators on the basis of their contribution to the effectiveness of TEI-school partnership endeavor. If not, title and adjunct status related to professional development could be provided to those cooperative teachers who exhibit a significant contribution to the efficient and effective implementation of this noble intention of the 20th century teacher education mode of practice. This would give some recognition and status to the cooperating teachers in the teacher education fraternity and thereby boost up their contribution. Adjustments of their workload, professional development and recognition of their role as student-teacher mentors would encourage the cooperating teachers to spend more time in introducing student-teachers into the life of school and the teaching profession. Therefore, the MoE in collaboration with TEIs and schools should provide cooperative teachers continuous professional development opportunity.

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Appendix A. Areas of desired help to be provided from cooperative teachers, as reported by student-teachers.

No.	Areas of desired help expected from school practitioners	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Expected Mean	Calculated mean
1.	Share teaching materials/resources that are related to the teaching of the subjects.	83	24	0	0	2.5	3.8
2.	Help in the planning of the lesson in the initial stage of teaching practice	65	42	0	0	2.5	3.6
3.	Give me independence to try out new innovative teaching approaches.	52	55	0	0	2.5	3.5
4.	Introduce me to teachers teaching the same subjects to get support and help.	107	0	0	0	2.5	4
5.	Provide guidance as to how I can effectively teach the content of the subject	100	7	0	0	2.5	3.9
6.	Provide opportunity for me to observe experienced teachers teaching	107	0	0	0	2.5	4
7.	Provide a profile of the classes I am going to teach	95	12	0	0	2.5	3.9
8.	Show me effective ways of managing different types of classrooms	72	35	0	0	2.5	3.7
9.	Show me how to determine the pace of the lesson for different ability classes	32	75	0	0	2.5	3.3
10.	Teach me techniques to handle difficult students in the class.	83	24	0	0	2.5	3.8
11.	Show me ways to make lesson interesting for different ability classes	68	39	0	0	2.5	3.6
12.	Show me how to build rapport with the students so as to gain their trust and cooperation.	76	31	0	0	2.5	3.7
13.	Show ways to gain students attention and motivate them to learn	91	16	0	0	2.5	3.8
14.	Introduce me to the general structure of the school system and culture.	100	7	0	0	2.5	3.9
15.	Let me know the rules and procedures to function effectively in the school.	99	8	0	0	2.5	3.9
16.	Provide me information on the various types of resources available for teaching subjects.	103	4	0	0	2.5	3.9
17.	Suggest ways to improve my teaching skills based on my performance in class.	107	0	0	0	2.5	4
18.	Provide encouragement and support when lessons do not work out well.	52	50	5	0	2.5	3.4
19.	Discuss with me how I may balance my teaching life and personal life.	5	70	32	0	2.5	2.7
20.	Provide constructive criticism and fair evaluation of my teaching.	100	7	0	0	2.5	3.9
21.	Total score	1597(74 %)	506(2 4%)	37(2%)	0	50	74.6
22.	Total mean score					2.5	3.7

(N= 107), ($p < .05$).

Appendix B. Areas of actual help extended from cooperative teachers, as reported by student-teachers.

No.	Areas of desired help given from school practitioners	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Expected Mean	Calculated Mean
1.	Share teaching materials/resources that are related to the teaching of the subjects.	0	21	69	17	2.5	2.0
2.	Help in the planning of the lesson in the initial stage of teaching practice	18	26	62	1	2.5	2.6
3.	Give me independence to try out new innovative teaching approaches.	30	51	26	0	2.5	3.0
4.	Introduce me to teachers teaching the same subjects to get support and help.	20	35	50	2	2.5	2.7
5.	Provide guidance as to how I can effectively teach the content of the subject	0	0	87	20	2.5	1.8
6.	Provide opportunity for me to observe experienced teachers teaching	20	18	60	9	2.5	2.4
7.	Provide a profile of the classes I am going to teach	0	0	77	30	2.5	1.7
8.	Show me effective ways of managing different types of classrooms	0	5	79	23	2.5	1.8
9.	Show me how to determine the pace of the lesson for different ability classes	0	0	93	14	2.5	1.9
10.	Teach me techniques to handle difficult students in the class.	0	8	67	32	2.5	1.8
11.	Show me ways to make lesson interesting for different ability classes	0	0	94	13	2.5	1.9
12.	Show me how to build rapport with the students so as to gain their trust and cooperation.	0	17	59	31	2.5	1.9
13.	Show ways to gain students attention and motivate them to learn	0	0	72	35	2.5	1.7
14.	Introduce me to the general structure of the school system and culture.	50	45	12	0	2.5	3.3
15.	Let me know the rules and procedures to function effectively in the school.	20	43	40	4	2.5	2.7
16.	Provide me information on the various types of resources available for teaching subjects.	0	50	45	12	2.5	2.3
17.	Suggest ways to improve my teaching skills based on my performance in class.	0	0	86	21	2.5	1.8
18.	Provide encouragement and support when lessons do not work out well.	0	0	100	7	2.5	1.9
19.	Discuss with me how I may balance my teaching life and personal life.	0	0	103	4	2.5	2.0
20.	Provide constructive criticism and fair evaluation of my teaching.	0	45	56	6	2.5	2.4
	Total Scores	158	364	1337	281	50	43.7
	Total Mean Scores					2.5	2.2

(N= 107), ($p < .05$).