Contribution of Teaching Practice in Improving Pre-Service Teachers' Competency in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha City

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Abstract: *This study assessed the contribution of teaching practice (TP) in improving pre-service teachers' competency in public secondary schools. It focused on: the extent TP contributes in improving pre-service teachers' competency in public secondary schools and the strategies for the TP activities towards improving pre-service teachers' competency. Teacher's Practical Theory guided the study. Mixed methods approach was adopted. The target population of 340 consisted of 170 TP teachers, 68 academic teachers, 68 quality assurance teachers and 34 school heads. Sample size comprised of 51 TP students' teachers, 20 academic teachers, 20 quality assurance teachers and 10 school heads. Stratified random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select sample size. Questionnaire and interviews were used as data collection instruments. Validity was established through expert judgment whereas reliability was determined using test-retest technique. Reliability index, r=0.839, was obtained using Cronbach Alpha Method. Credibility of qualitative data was ascertained through multiple analysts and reporting of research process. Descriptive statistics analysed quantitative data in SPSS version 25 and results were presented in tables, while qualitative data were analysed thematically along research questions and presented in narrative forms. The findings revealed that TP is a critical bridge between theoretical instruction and practical application in real-world classrooms. It not only enhances teaching skills but also improves the professionalism of pre-service teachers by embedding values, ethics, and practical means. In conclusion, TP is a pillar in teacher education for developing competent, ethical, and confident pre-service teachers. This study recommends that educational stakeholders should collaborate to strengthen TP programmes.*

Keywords: *Teaching, Role, Competency, Schools, Arusha, Tanzania*

How to cite this work (APA):

1. Introduction

Teaching practice (TP) acts as the intermediary between the theoretical knowledge and the real-life experience that provide student-teachers with competencies required for the workplace (Møller-Skau & Lindstøl, 2022; Stavridis and Vassiliki, 2022). Nevertheless, teacher competency has been a global discussion. A study in Norway by Scarparolo & Subban (2021) acknowledged that, teaching practice (TP) for student-teachers is crucial for the development of their professional competences and represent a fundamental aspect of quality in their professional development. Teaching practice is grounded

in the ideology of emancipator education since it attempts to empower both student teachers and teachers to actively participate in the learning process (Luchembe, 2021). However, stakeholders such as schools, mentors, pre-service teachers and university-based teachers claimed that there is a gap between the theories learned in campus courses and curricula school-related practices which are to be performed in classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2022). This is rooted in the concerns on the effectiveness of TP in equipping pre-service teachers with relevant skills vary across regions.

Studies in Malaysia have proven that teaching practice helped pre-service teachers to have better discussions with lecturers and mentors and thus managed to help them to determine the approaches to use and their implications in teaching (Choy et al, 2020; Fariza, 2024). In addition, teaching practice was found to help pre- service teachers to enhance those skills related to problem identification, decision making and the selection of approaches to overcome problems in classroom situations, and that it was incredibly significant in developing pre-service teachers' confidence in themselves (Eu Leong et al. 2025). Further, pre-service teachers also gather experience related to the areas of management and administration of schools, as well as the management of extra-curricular activities. However, Jamil et al. (2024) contended that although teaching practice is a fundamental programme for the improvement of teaching effectively and efficiently among pre-service teachers, there is still a disparity between TP and the actual practice. For instance, in Rwanda, teaching practice reflects a critical condition on the competence and performance to enable student-teachers analyse their teaching experiences operationally.

In Kenya a study by Keter and Wabuke (2023) reported that, to develop mastery of challenging content, problem-solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction, teachers should employ more sophisticated forms of teaching that are helpful to learners in the 21st century. To meet this demand, student-teachers should undergo rigorous hands-on training during their training programmes through effective training of prospective teachers in teaching practice (Odhiambo, 2021).

In the context of Tanzanian university education, in order to qualify to be a teacher, a pre-service teacher should have a command of both the theoretical part of the teaching content and teaching methodologies together with practical competencies which can be realized through teaching practice (Kihwele & Mtandi, 2020). Despite the crucial role of TP in enhancing pre-service teachers' competency, there are various challenges in actual implementation of the skills obtained (Kibona, 2024). In essence, teaching practice should equip pre-service teachers with practical skills, professional competence, and workplace readiness (Lucie &Mugiraneza, 2024). However, one of the main problems in the teaching practice is the mismatch between theory and practice as these two areas seem to be not integrated in a satisfactory way, such that, university degree does not guarantee improved pre-service teachers' competency (Lawrent, 2025). These issues reflect a broader concern over whether TP in its current form contributes meaningfully to developing the competencies needed for effective teaching. This study, therefore, investigated the contribution of teaching practice in improving pre-service teachers' competence in public secondary schools in Arusha city, addressing the gap between training expectations and actual classroom performance.

1.1 Research Questions

The study investigated the following research questions:
1. To what extent does TP contribute in improving pre-service teachers' competency in public secondary schools in Arusha city?
2. What are the strategies for the teaching practice activities towards improving pre-service teachers' competency in public secondary schools in Arusha city?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Teacher's Practical Theory was the basis of this study. Teacher's practical theory was developed and expanded by scholars such Elbaz Freema, Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly in 1980s (Talaee et el., 2023).

2.2 Teacher's Practical Theory

The theory contends that skills and knowledge teachers acquire through practice is reflected in their instructional practices and decisions (Dickerson et al. 2022). It assumes that teachers' actions are guided by personal beliefs, experience, and contextual factors. The theory further postulates that, teachers construct theory capabilities through reflection on practices forming knowledge which lays the background for future teaching and development (Cai et al., 2023).

2.2.1 Strengths of Teacher's Practical Theory

Teachers' practical theory refers to the knowledge, strategies, and frameworks that teachers develop and

utilize in their daily classroom practices. One of its primary strengths is that it is grounded in real-world experience, making it highly relevant and adaptable to the specific needs of students. Teachers' practical theory enables them to make informed decisions based on their personal experiences and observations of students' behaviour, learning patterns, and classroom dynamics. This type of theory emphasizes the importance of flexibility and context, enabling teachers to respond to diverse classroom situations effectively. Furthermore, practical theory fosters a reflective practice, where teachers continually assess and refine their methods to improve student outcomes. As a result, it can lead to more effective teaching practices that directly benefit students, as teachers apply theories that are honed through actual classroom interactions.

2.2.2 Application of Teacher's Practical Theory

Teacher's practical theory is essential for enhancing educational outcomes and fostering a conducive learning environment. Practical theory serves as framework that guide teachers in their instructional strategies, classroom management, and interactions with students. Teachers utilize practical theory to inform their instructional decisions, ensuring that the methods they choose align with their understanding of how students learn best. Practical theory helps teachers design lessons that actively engage students. By understanding the principles of motivation and engagement, educators can create learning experiences that capture students' interest and encourage participation. Teachers apply practical theory to differentiate instruction effectively. This means tailoring lessons to meet diverse learning needs within the classroom, allowing all students to access the curriculum at their level. In addition, the theory encourages teachers to reflect on their practices regularly.

2.2 Empirical Review

This part presents the findings of the previous researchers which are related to the topic under investigation.

2.2.1 Influence of Teaching Practice in Improving Pre-Service Teachers' Competence

In Pakistan, Mahmood et al. (2023) conducted a comparative analysis on the effects of teaching practice in shaping prospective teachers' professional identities. Data were collected from 45 cooperative institutions and 80 teachers were selected using purposive random sampling technique. Data were collected through a questionnaire. Mean score was calculated to answer the research questions and t-test was applied. The findings show that

teaching practice plays an important role to overcome future classroom challenges.

The study conducted in Botswana by Lebala et al. (2024) analysed the effectiveness and challenges in teaching practice as perceived by the undergraduate pre-service teachers. Descriptive and correlational survey research design was employed. Data were analysed through t-test and regression analysis. Findings revealed that the teaching practice was effective and neither gender nor age differences were determined in the teaching practice effectiveness. Further, insufficient time for teaching practice, un-conducive school environment and unfair allocation of host schools were determined as the three challenges predictors of TP effectiveness. Thus, the study posits that teaching practice effectiveness can be improved if the pre-service teachers are provided with sufficient time for teaching practice, conducive school environment and a fair allocation and placement mechanism of the host schools.

The study in Nigeria by Odutayo et al. (2022) examined student-teachers perception of the effectiveness of teaching practice supervision. The quantitative descriptive method was employed to conduct the study. Random sampling technique was employed to sample 150 student-teachers at the 400 level of a university in the metropolis. A researchers-designed questionnaire titled "Student-teachers' Perception of the Effectiveness of Teaching Practice. Questionnaire was used for data collection, with descriptive and inferential statistics data analysis. Findings revealed that the majority of the student-teachers perceived teaching practice supervision as effective for improving students' teaching knowledge and skills. The study conducted in Zambia by Mandyata et al. (2024) based on the theory of policy, and practice towards teacher training and classroom practice. The language of instruction was observed to be a barrier in Zambian Colleges and university lecturers hence, in-service primary school teachers. The method used was qualitative approach only. The study identified gaps between training and practice within the framework of Zambia's language of instruction policy. It was found that pre-service teacher preparation was generally theoretical and not practical. Opportunities for practice were found be limited, leading to teachers lacking required competencies and using outdated approaches in schools.

In Tanzania a study by Msuya (2022) on Students-Teachers' Professional Development during Teaching Practice disclosed that there is a good experience student teachers get from the Host Institutions. A mixed research approach with cross-sectional survey was employed. Data was collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The study involved 245 participants. The

findings indicated that student-teachers received positive mentorship from host institutions through orientation before getting direct into classroom exposure. However, the study has not explained how the TP helps the student teachers become effective and efficient in this field. Therefore, the current study articulated the extent to which teaching practice activities improve pre-service teachers' competency in Arusha city.

2.2.2 Strategic Measures on Teaching Practice for Improving Pre-Service Teachers' Competency

Research in Belgium by Scoupe et al. (2024) explored reflective practice among pre-service teachers and the role of portfolios promoting professional competencies. A qualitative approach method with semi-structured interviews was applied to 16 pre-service teachers. Thematic analysis was adopted. Analysis of the interview data showed that students used the portfolio as a reflective practice. The portfolio experience appeared to foster expertise, lifelong learning, social competences and efficacy beliefs. In addition, the portfolio enabled students to explore their beliefs and knowledge and to validate their assumptions and beliefs. The support of peers and tutors was crucial during this experience.

In South Africa, Van der Merwe (2022) conducted a study in preparing pre-service teachers to guide and support learning in schools. The study followed an interpretive research approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 pre-service teachers. The results indicated that the pre-service teachers viewed learning about the science of learning and competencies for a fast-changing world as valuable to enrich their teaching. Despite being aware that they still had some gaps in their understanding of some teaching strategies, the results showed that pre-service teachers valued the strategies they learned in the course. Therefore, the knowledge the pre-service teachers gained from the course has provided them with a sound basis to guide and support learning in varying school context.

The study in Malawi by Kishindo-Mafuta (2021) aimed at analysing the Bachelor of Education (Language) programme at Mzuzu University in order to understand how theory and practice are integrated. The data was generated through document analysis. The study revealed that the programme has made an effort to integrate theory with practice through the kind of courses that are offered to the students. The English teaching methodology courses provide a platform in which the content is integrated into the practice. Also, the theoretical knowledge gained in the lecture rooms is actualised through teaching practice.

A study survey in Tanzania by Mpate et al. (2021) explored the role of the triad relationship in shaping pre-service teachers' experience during teaching practice. The study is descriptive in nature employing a qualitative approach and data from a sample of 18 participants. The data were analysed through thematic analysis. The findings revealed that limited relationship, limited social and instructional support from mentor teachers and supervisors' limited assessment and feedback provision, negatively impacted pre-service teachers' learning during teaching practice. It is important to equally engage supervisors, mentor teachers and Heads of school in formulating appropriate support practices for pre-service teachers; implementing a feedback process. However, its reliance on a small, localized sample with qualitative approach and lack of broader generalizability limits the applicability of the findings to wider contexts. This current study employed the optimal sample for both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance broader generalizability in order to enhance applicability of the findings to wider contexts.

3. Methodology

This study employed convergent mixed methods design whereby both qualitative and quantitative data was collected simultaneously for the purpose of gaining more understanding about the research problem (Creswell & Creswell 2023). The target population for this study was 340 individuals which comprised 34 school heads, 68 school academic teachers 170 student-teachers on TP and 68 quality assurance teachers from 34 public secondary schools in Arusha City (MoEST, 2024). Heads of schools were included in the study because they are in charge of curriculum implementation. Teachers on TP were included because the researcher is concerned about their competency as a result of skills gained from TP. Academic teachers were included in the study because they are directly responsible for supervising and mentoring teachers on teaching practice, thus providing valuable insights into their performance and professional growth. Quality assurances were involved in this study because they are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education delivery in schools, ensuring that teaching standards and practices meet the required guidelines and policies. Therefore, this population was the core representatives as both are involved fully in education programmes.

Gay and Airasian (2003) observed that a sample of 10% to 30% of the target population is representative enough for the research study. This study considered 30% a reasonable sample size to work with. The sample size of this study from 34 public secondary schools was 101 respondents representing 51 TP teachers which is 30% of 170, 10 school heads which is 30% of 34, 20 academic teachers which is

30% of 68 and 20 quality assurance teachers which is 30% of 68. Therefore, the selected sample size of 101respondents provided valid and reliable data about research problem. This study employed purposive sampling to get heads of secondary schools, and stratified random sampling was employed to get TP teachers, academic teachers and quality assurance teachers. The reason behind the use of purposive sampling was to collect specific data from specific people since they are very aware of what is going on in their working stations. The justification for the choice of random sampling was based on the fact that every teacher, teaching practice, academic teachers and quality assurance teachers had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study.

In this study, the researcher used questionnaire and interview guide to gather information about research problem. The researcher considered content and face validity. Content validity was used to check the representation of the contents on a particular concept of the study while face validity dealt with appearance, correct grammatical sentences and clarity of language used in research instruments. Therefore, questionnaires and interview guide were validated by observing the face and content validity by exposing them to the expert who provided recommendations and suggestions that were considered by the researcher. The validity of instruments for collecting qualitative data was done by ensuring its trustworthiness, transferability and dependability by carrying out repeated trials on the instruments to ensure it's valid for the study. This study tested reliability using Cronbach's coefficient (Alpha). To check the reliability of the instrument, pilot study was conducted by using selected respondents who were not included in the actual study. The responses obtained from the pilot study were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Then, the Cronbach's Alpha test was administered to determine the internal consistency score for items of each questionnaire. The reliability results indicate that academic teachers, quality assurance and student-teachers' questionnaire demonstrated high level of internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha value of 0.839 for school quality assurance teachers, 0.874 for teachers in-charge of academics and, 0.737 for teachers in TP respectively. Therefore, the collected information had an acceptable level of reliability and hence permitted the researcher to proceed with data analysis. According to Okendo et al (2022), in social sciences, the value of 0.7 and above represents acceptable reliability. These higher reliability score ensure that the findings derived from these instruments are reliable. Data which were obtained through quantitative instruments were analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in frequency tables. The data were entered according to various variables and research questions in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 computer software for windows programme. Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis and were converged to strength the quantitative findings.

During data collection, the researcher ensured confidentiality of the information which was obtained from the participants by assuring the research participants that the information is purely for research purposes only (Hammersley and Traianou, 2022). To ensure this, anonymity of the participants was taken care of by asking both the teachers and educational officers not to indicate their names on the research questionnaires. To avoid plagiarism and fraud, the researcher duly acknowledged all the authors of the works that had been cited. Finally, the researcher also avoided plagiarism by acknowledging cited work.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings are discussed in accordance with the themes generated from the research objectives that the study sought to investigate.

4.1 Findings on the Influence of Teaching Practice in Improving Pre-Service Teachers' Competency in Arusha City

Objective one of this current study was to determine the influence of teaching practice in improving pre-service teachers' competency in public secondary schools in Arusha city. Under objective one, questionnaires were administered to 51 teachers on TP, 20 teachers in charge of academics, and 20 school quality assurance teachers. The respondents were required to state the extent to which the items in the questionnaire on teaching practice improved pre-service teachers' competency in Arusha city. Five Point Likert Scale was adopted; Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). While for respondents, TTP=Teachers in Teaching Practice, TIA=Teachers In-Charge of Academics and SQAT=School Quality Assurance Teachers. The data are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Data on the influence of teaching practice in improving pre-service teachers' competency

Item	Respondents	Responses: f(%)					
		VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean
Enhance professionalism	TTP (n=51)	10(19.6)	41(80.4)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.2
	TIA (n=20)	4(20)	16(80)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	6(30)	14(70)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Improve pre-service teacher performance	TTP (n=51)	31(60.8)	20(39.2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.5
	TIA (n=20)	11(55)	9(45)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	7(35)	13(65)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Obtaining classroom experiences	TTP (n=51)	22(43.1)	29(56.9)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	8(40)	12(60)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	6(30)	14(70)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Confidence building in teaching	TTP (n=51)	21(41.2)	30(58.8)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	4(20)	16(80)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	8(60)	12(40)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Handle administrative duties	TTP (n=51)	16(31.4)	30(58.8)	5(9.8)	0(0)	0(0)	4.1
	TIA (n=20)	5(25)	12(60)	1(5)	1(5)	1(5)	
	SQAT (n=20)	6(30)	10(50)	2(10)	1(5)	1(5)	
Fostering ethical conduct	TTP (n=51)	12(23.5)	34(66.7)	4(7.8)	1(2)	0(0)	3.9
	TIA (n=20)	4(20)	14(70)	1(5)	1(5)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	5(25)	11(55)	2(10)	0(0)	2(10)	
Building professionalism	TTP (n=51)	9(17.6)	39(76.5)	2(3.9)	1(2)	0(0)	4.1
	TIA (n=20)	4(20)	16(80)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	2(10)	18(90)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Bridging a gap between theory and practice	TTP (n=51)	11(21.6)	36(70.6)	3(5.9)	1(2)	0(0)	4.2
	TIA (n=20)	5(25)	14(70)	0(0)	1(5)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	7(35)	11(55)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Improves organizational skills	TTP (n=51)	10(19.6)	39(76.5)	2(3.9)	0(0)	0(0)	4.2
	TIA (n=20)	5(25)	15(75)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	4(20)	16(80)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Exposure to the policy and curriculum	TTP (n=51)	18(35.3)	33(64.7)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.3
	TIA (n=20)	5(25)	15(75)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	5(25)	15(75)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Development of teaching and learning skills	TTP (n=51)	16(31.4)	35(68.6)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.3
	TIA (n=20)	5(25)	15(75)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	3(15)	17(85)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	

f = frequency, % = percentages, values in brackets are percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement.
Source: Research (2025)

The data in table 1 indicates that teaching practice significantly improves professionalism among pre-service teachers in Arusha City. This was revealed by 19.6% of TTP who reported a very high extent and 80.4% high extent; 20% of TIA reported very high extent and 80% high extent, while 30% of SQAT reported very high extent and 70% high extent on enhancing professionalism through teaching practice providing a mean score of 4.2. This shows that field exposure allows trainees to adhere to professional norms, ethical behaviour, and pedagogical standards expected of competent teachers. Through regular interactions with experienced teachers and engagement in professional environments, pre-service teachers are socialized into the teaching profession, thereby reinforcing discipline, punctuality, communication skills, and reflective practices necessary for long-term career development. In reinforcing these quantitative data, one head of school reported that:

> "Teaching practice helps these young teachers understand that teaching is not just standing in front of a class; it involves following professional rules, time management, and showing respect to learners and

colleagues" (Personal Interview, 25ᵗʰ, May, 2025).

The response shows that teaching practice serves as a powerful tool through which pre-service teachers improve their professional conduct. Observing and imitating experienced teachers allows them to be aware that teaching involves more than instruction since it includes ethics, punctuality, and respectful professional identity through practice rather than theory alone. Thus, this confirms that professionalism is not only taught but also demonstrated in action. These findings on professionalism as an influence of TP activities concur with Mahmood et al. (2023) who revealed that TP plays a significant role in shaping prospective teachers' professional identity. These studies agree that teaching practice expose pre-service teachers into professional standards. Therefore, real-world exposure reinforces the values and responsibilities that define a professional teacher in shaping their professional ethics.

Also, teaching practice was reported to greatly improve teacher performance, with 60.8% of TTP stating a very high extent and 39.2% high extent; 55% TIA stated very high extent and 45% high extent; while 35% of SQAT stated very high extent and 65% high extent on improving pre-service teacher performance through teaching practice resulting to a mean score of 4.5. This indicates the importance of hands-on teaching experiences in equipping future teachers with the practical skills needed to deliver effective instruction. Exposure to real classroom environments allows trainees to apply pedagogical theories, manage time efficiently, assess students appropriately, and adapt teaching methods, thereby fostering improved performance and readiness to take on full teaching responsibilities. Further, from the interview the head of school stated:

> "*We have seen some of the student-teachers perform even better than some new graduate teachers because they are guided closely and they put extra effort to apply what they've learnt*" (Personal interview, 26ᵗʰ, May, 2025).

This interview illustrates how close supervision and immediate application of theory contribute to high performance. It also highlights that performance improvement is connected to the structure and quality of mentoring during teaching practice, making it a critical factor in training effective educators. This suggests the importance of real-time feedback and reflection in enhancing teaching performance. These findings on improved performance are in line with Odutayo et al. (2022) who showed that supervision during teaching practice improved student-teachers' instructional skills. Similarly, Lucie & Mugiraneza (2024) reported the improvements in lesson delivery, communication, and classroom management. Therefore, an effective supervised teaching practice is foundational to instructional proficiency.

It has been indicated in table 1 that teaching practice is crucial in improving pre-service teacher competency through the development of teaching and learning skills. This was approved by 31.4% of TTP who indicated very high extent and 68.6% high extent; 25% of TIA stated very high extent and 75% high extent, while 15% SQAT ticked very high extent and 85% high extent leading to a mean score of 4.3. These skills include lesson delivery techniques, learner engagement, use of teaching aids, classroom questioning, and differentiated instruction. Through active teaching, observation, and feedback, pre-service teachers gain mastery in creating effective learning environments, thus enhancing their overall competency and preparedness for future teaching careers. In strengthening these quantitative findings one school head noted that:

> "*By the end of their practice, most of pre-service teachers can conduct lessons, use teaching aids well, and even vary their teaching style depending on learners' needs*" (Personal interview, 28ᵗʰ, May, 2025).

These data from the interview proves that teaching practice is essential in enhancing instructional skills through ensuring that pre-service teachers emerge not only with theoretical knowledge but with the practical abilities necessary for effective classroom delivery. Therefore, pre-service teachers demonstrate growth in adapting teaching styles, using resources effectively, and engaging learners, which shows their transformation into real teachers.

4.2 Findings on the Strategic Measures for the Teaching Practice Activities Towards Improving Pre-Service Teachers' Competency in Arusha City

The second research objective of this study investigated the strategies for teaching practice activities to improve pre-service teachers' competency in public secondary schools in Arusha city. Questionnaires were administered to 51 teachers on teaching practice, 20 teachers in charge of academics, and 20 school quality assurance teachers were requested to indicate their level of agreement with the variables in the questionnaire. The scale of responses comprised of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (AG), Undecided (UD) Disagree (DS) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The responses were quantified to generate frequencies, percentages and means (Taherdoost, 2017). While for respondents, TTP=Teachers in Teaching Practice, TIA=Teachers In-Charge of Academics and

SQAT=School Quality Assurance Teachers. Table 2 shows the summary of the strategies for the teaching practice activities towards improving pre-service teachers' competency.

Table 2: Strategies in teaching practice activities for improving pre-service teachers' competency

Item	Respondents	Responses: f(%)					
		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
Continuous guidance and support	TTP (n=51)	14(27.5)	37(72.5)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.3
	TIA (n=20)	5(25)	15(75)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	9(45)	11(55)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Technology integration	TTP (n=51)	26(51)	25(49)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	5(25)	15(75)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	5(25)	15(75)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Conduct micro-teaching sessions	TTP (n=51)	18(35.3)	31(60.8)	2(3.9)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	8(40)	11(55)	1(5)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	9(45)	11(55)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Encourage reflective practices	TTP (n=51)	21(41.2)	30(58.8)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	5(25)	14(70)	0(0)	1(5)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	9(45)	10(50)	1(5)	0(0)	0(0)	
Increase performance appraisals	TTP (n=51)	16(31.4)	35(68.6)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	12(60)	8(40)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	10(50)	10(50)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Seminars and workshops in handling work environments	TTP (n=51)	22(43,1)	28(54.9)	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	9(45)	11(55)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	9(30)	14(70)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Familiarize student-teachers to administrative tasks	TTP (n=51)	23(45.1)	28(54.9)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.5
	TIA (n=20)	9(45)	11(55)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	12(60)	7(35)	1(5)	0(0)	0(0)	
Exposure pre-service teachers into real conflict resolution	TTP (n=51)	19(37.3)	32(62.7)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	10(50)	10(50)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	8(40)	12(60)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Supervision, mentoring and feedback	TTP (n=51)	27(52.9)	24(47.1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.5
	TIA (n=20)	9(45)	10(50)	1(5)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	11(55)	9(45)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	-
Reinforce professional conduct and ethics	TTP (n=51)	22(43.1)	29(56.9)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	5(25)	15(75)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	6(30)	14(70)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
Career readiness support	TTP (n=51)	23(45.1)	28(54.9)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4.4
	TIA (n=20)	7(35)	13(65)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	
	SQAT (n=20)	8(40)	11(55)	1(5)	0(0)	0(0)	

f = frequency, % = percentages, values in brackets are percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement. Those with contrary opinion to the statement are implied.
Source: Research (2025)

The data in table 2 revealed that 27.5% of TTP strongly agreed and 72.5% agreed; 25% of TIA strongly agreed and 75% agreed; while 45% of SQAT strongly agreed and 55% agreed that continuous guidance and support is a key strategy to improve pre-service teachers' competency, yielding a high mean score of 4.4. This overwhelming consensus implies that when pre-service teachers are continuously guided and supported throughout their teaching practice, their instructional skills, confidence, and problem-solving abilities improve significantly. Consistent support from in-service teachers and academic teachers enables them to apply theoretical knowledge effectively in real classroom settings. Also, during the interview one among the heads of schools reported that:

> "Regular check-ins, scheduled feedback meetings, and accessible experienced educators reduce anxiety and improve the pre-service teachers' lesson delivery ability" (Personal interview, 29th, May, 2025).

This shows that, when experienced teachers offer timely feedback and emotional support, pre-service teachers become more confident, better at delivering lessons, and more proficient at addressing classroom challenges

proving that sustained guidance significantly strengthens professional growth. These findings on continuous guidance and support align with Van der Merwe (2022) who stressed the value pre-service teachers placed on learning teaching strategies and receiving continuous academic support to guide learning. Similarly, Mpate et al. (2021) found that limited triad relationships and inadequate mentor support hindered teacher learning supporting the need for continuous guidance. Msuya (2022) showed a positive mentorship from experienced teachers as a crucial factor in developing professional competencies. This proves that the availability of continuous professional guidance builds trust and a productive learning environment, which leads to the improved competence among pre-service teachers.

Regarding technology integration, the majority of respondents, 51% of TTP strongly agreed and 49% agreed; 25% of TIA strongly agreed and 75% agreed; while 25% strongly agreed and 75% of SQAT agreed on integrating technology as the strategy in teaching practice for improving pre-service teacher's competency provided a mean of 4.4. This means that incorporating technological tools such as digital lesson planning, smart boards, and educational apps equips pre-service teachers with modern pedagogical techniques that enhances lesson delivery. Effective use of technology in classrooms not only improves students' engagement but also prepares pre-service teachers for the demands of modern education systems. To strength this, one school head viewed that:

> "*Pre-service teachers who have digital skills are more creative and effective in capturing students' attention using power-point slides, and audio visuals to capture students' attention*" (Interview, 29th, May, 2025).

This interview response implies that integrating digital tools into teaching practice enhances both instructional creativity and learner engagement. Pre-service teachers with digital competencies are not only more confident but also more effective in making learning interactive and relevant, demonstrating that modern education demands technological skills. While in support, Mahmood et al. (2023) revealed that TP helped pre-service teachers overcome classroom challenges using modern technological tools. Moreover, Lucie & Mugiraneza (2024) found that pre-service teachers developed improved problem-solving and communication skills that can be enhanced further through the use of educational technology. Therefore, these findings validate that technology integration not only enhances engagement but also empowers pre-service teachers to become innovative

teachers preparing them for contemporary teaching contexts.

In terms of conducting micro-teaching sessions, this strategy was strongly approved by 35.3% of TTP, 60.8% agreed, and 3.9% were undecided; further, 40% TIA strongly agreed, 55% agreed, and 5% were undecided; while 45% of SQAT strongly agreed and 55% agreed. The strategy of conducting micro-teaching sessions had a strong mean score of 4.4. Micro-teaching allows pre-service teachers to practice specific teaching skills in a controlled, low-risk environment before applying them in real classrooms. This approach enhances self-awareness and enables student-teachers to receive focused feedback, thereby refining their teaching techniques. However, the undecided percentage shows that, some pre-service teachers may not have been exposed to well-structured micro-teaching programs, highlighting a need for more micro-teaching sessions. The interview data from one among the heads of schools stated that:

> "*Pre-service teachers who had done micro-teaching appeared more prepared and less nervous when handling real classes.*" (Personal interview, 29th, May, 2025).

These findings demonstrate that micro-teaching serves as a critical rehearsal platform that enhances confidence and classroom management abilities among pre-service teachers. The findings on micro-teaching are strongly validated by Kimaro et al. (2021), who noted that micro-teaching enhanced pre-service teachers' abilities in lesson planning, classroom management, and teaching strategies. These foundational skills gained through micro-teaching sessions directly influence the competency of pre-service teachers, especially before actual classroom experiences.

Strategies such as continuous guidance, supervision, reflective practices, integration of technology, and micro-teaching were strongly endorsed. These findings reflect the essence of Teacher's Practical Theory that is essential for enhancing educational outcomes and fostering a conducive learning environment. Practical theory serves as framework that guides teachers in their instructional strategies, classroom management, and interactions with students. Concurrently, Teachers' Practical Theory supports these strategies as mechanisms through which pre-service teachers accumulate experiential knowledge, bridging formal education with real-world demands (Cai et al., 2023). Micro-teaching and administrative exposure allow learners to develop context-specific skills, promoting professional growth through individualized learning experiences.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Teaching practice is a critical bridge between theoretical instruction and practical application in real-world classrooms. It not only enhances teaching skills but also improves the professionalism of pre-service teachers by embedding values, ethics, and practical means. By transforming theoretical knowledge into actionable teaching strategies, it enhances confidence, adaptability, and a deep understanding of classroom dynamics. This means that teaching practice is an essential stage in teacher education, serving as the transformative platform through which it inspires teachers into ethical and performance professionals.

The study revealed strategies such as mentorship, reflective practices, performance reviews, and technology integration which show a structured and proper approach to enhancing teaching competencies. These strategies address both instructional and professional development needs, enabling pre-service teachers to reflect on their techniques, understand their roles, and prepare for future challenges. Therefore, sustainable support from these strategies significantly leads to the growth of pre-service teachers, ensuring they are not only ready to teach but also ready to lead and perform variety of educational activities within varied educational settings.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the researcher recommended the following:

1. School administrators should provide consistent mentorship and supervision to pre-service teachers through structured observation, regular feedback, and collaborative planning. They should involve student teachers in both instructional and non-instructional tasks, such as conflict resolution, time management, and record-keeping, to expose them to the full scope of teaching responsibilities. Administrators should also foster a professional and inclusive school culture that encourages ethical behavior, punctuality, and constructive reflection. By promoting reflective practices and organizing performance appraisals, school leaders can support the professional growth of pre-service teachers and ensure their readiness for full-time teaching roles.
2. Pre-service teachers should fully engage in all aspects of teaching practice, including lesson planning, classroom management, learner assessment, and technology integration, to build a solid foundation of teaching skills. They should actively seek and apply feedback from mentors, maintain reflective teaching journals, and remain open to learning and self-improvement. Pre-service teachers should also demonstrate high ethical standards, professionalism, and a commitment to continuous growth by being punctual, respectful, and well-prepared. Additionally, they should use their practicum experience to network with in-service teachers and peers, creating lasting professional relationships that can support their future career development.

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