Moulding A Reflective Teacher: A Broader Role For Kenyan School Principals In Teaching Practice

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Abstract: *This paper presents a conceptualisation of teaching practice based on current literature on Teacher Education in which the principal of the practicum school could play a broader role. It highlights the importance of the teaching practice phase of teacher learning, proposes reflective teaching as a necessary goal of Teacher Education and presents teaching practice as an appropriate moment to start moulding student teachers as reflective practitioners. The principal's role in teaching practice therefore needs to go beyond the usual management procedures, to include pedagogical, mentoring, emotional and inductive support. This could be realised through carefully guided intervention or facilitation of structures and organisational communication within the schools. For this to be realised, there ought to be stronger linkages between Teacher Education institutions and schools and facilitation of collaborative forums to discuss the knowledge bases for teachers and develop a sense of shared responsibility and language for induction of teachers into the teaching profession.*

Introduction

In Kenyan schools, principals play a very significant role in the implementation of the national goals of education, management of resources and facilitation of learning. Besides being concerned with the learning of their students, some principals sponsor their teaching staff for in-service courses in specific subjects, co-curricular related workshops and also organise visits to their schools by scholars and practitioners in education and other relevant fields; to share with their students and teachers current perspectives on many aspects of life. In secondary schools in particular, principals usually organise talks on wider socio-cultural and economic issues including career choice, employment, gender issues, human rights, environmental matters, health concerns, further education and employment. For teachers, common themes in such talks include interpretations of new curricula, syllabi or prescribed texts; and such general aspects as time management, teamwork and motivation.

In the recent past, with the introduction of more flexible programmes in universities, many principals have supported their teachers to take up school-based courses at both undergraduate and post graduate level, besides taking up such courses themselves. Some principals (through their branches of Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association - KSSHA), have organised and attended short courses offered by universities on relevant topics. Clearly, the role of secondary school principals in Kenya is increasingly including facilitating professional growth for their teachers and getting to work more closely with universities. Apparently, this collaboration needs to be encouraged and enhanced.

Teaching Practice (TP) is one of the professional development activities in which principals have commendably cooperated with universities over the years. Indeed, they have not only allowed student teachers to practice in their schools, but many of them have also offered the practicum teachers support in various forms and worked closely with universities in ensuring that the student teachers have useful experiences. The principals' roles in managing teaching practice; however, have been in terms of routine administration. In this paper; based on current literature

in Teacher Education (TE) and School Leadership, (and in the spirit of enhancing the collaboration) we suggest a broader role which, involves more pedagogical and inductive support for teacher learning during TP.

In the subsequent pages, we reiterate the importance of TP; explain the concept of reflection in teaching and how it may be supported during TP, then suggest how the school principal may play a role in moulding a reflective teacher.

Teaching Practice (TP)

Many institutions offering Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes require their students to take part in a field experience, in a school or a college or any other teaching institution where they can interact with an actual school community. This session is usually referred to as teaching practicum or teaching practice (Liston et al., 2006; Derrick and Dicks, 2005; Brown and Nachino-Brown, 1990; Richards, 1998; Ayot and Wanga, 1987; Stones and Morris, 1972

Currently, there is a general understanding among teacher educators that TP is a session for continued teacher learning; that it may help student teachers to reflect upon their subject matter, pedagogy, learners, curriculum, contexts and educational policies , with a view to improving their attitudes , knowledge and skills (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Imig and Imig, 2006; Otero, 2006; Richards,1998; Bodóczsky and Malderez, 1996; Freeman,1990; Gebhard,1990) Adams et al. (2006) observe that 'in moving to the front of the classroom, beginning teachers should reflectively critique their own school experiences and resulting beliefs about education (p.1).

Importance of TP: Darling Hammond (2006b) identifies sustained TP as one of the 'pedagogical cornerstones' of 'powerful teacher education' (p.306), which enables teachers to bridge the theory-practice and gain deep insights on the unique differences, interests and needs of learners. Derrick and Dicks (2005) consider TP as a key element of all approved teacher education qualifications in the United Kingdom and other countries. They say that TP makes crucial contributions in transforming one from the student status to teacher frame of mind Johnson (1996**)** observes that the practicum offers the most fundamental stage in learning to teach.

Richard and Crookes (1998) note that it is considered a 'major opportunity for the student teacher to acquire the practical skills and knowledge needed to function as an effective language teacher' (p.9). To illustrate this importance, Richards and Crookes report that seventy five percent of Teacher Education (TE) programmes that they studied, from various parts of the world, had a TP component in various forms. It has also been noted that TP plays a role in education similar to internship or field attachment in other professions such as medicine, law, and engineering. For this reason, some scholars have referred to TP as a clinical experience (Darling-Hammond, 2006 a); Derrick and Dicks, 2006; Brown and Nacino-Brown, 1990). Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that:

> *Just as medical educators believe physicians cannot properly apply the techniques of medicine without understanding how the human body works, teacher educators in these programs (that she studied) believe that without direct knowledge of how learning occurs, teachers have no benchmarks by*

> *which to evaluate teaching ideas or materials, construct learning opportunities or adapt their teaching when students do not respond to a particular approach. Ensuring that teachers understand who they are teaching and how they learn empowers teachers to organise their practice around the pursuit of learning rather than just covering the curriculum or getting through the book (p.85).*

Darling-Hammond (2006a) explains that for teachers to know their work there is necessity for both coursework and teaching practice that could enable student teachers to study learner development in various domains. She adds that teachers also need to know the unique differences, interests and needs of learners. Student teachers also need to be educated on how to observe learners, in class and outside - perhaps during co-curricular activities to enable them pitch their teaching at the right level. The secondary school teachers who will handle older children, mostly adolescents especially need knowledge on related factors that influence learning at this stage such as peer influence, media and socio-cultural constructions of issues that are likely to be of interest and influence to learners. Also included in this learner knowledge is the entry behaviour of learners into the subject.

In Kenya, just like many other countries, TP is considered to be very important in TE. It is said to be a means of transforming what teachers have learnt in TE programmes at university into an ability to actually teach in real classrooms (Barasa, 2005).'Teaching practice is the most important aspect of training an individual to become a professionally qualified teacher' (Ayot and Wanga, 1987).TP serves many purposes, some of which include: linking coursework and actual teaching, learning from expertise, constructing own ways of teaching, understanding the broader contexts of teaching, assessment of the TE institution and cultivating the skills of reflective teaching (Darling –Hammond, 2006a; Zeichner, 2006; Bodóczsky and Malderez, 1996; Brown and Nacino-Brown, 1990; Ayot and Wanga, 1987). In this paper, we are concerned with the last purpose; consequently, we now look at the concept of reflection in a little more detail.

Reflection in Teacher Education

The notion of reflection can be traced to Dewey (1933), cited by several writers on this subject; such as Roberts (1998), Bartlett (1990), and Korthagen (2001). Dewey had defined reflective thought as:

> *active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends, (p.9) … Reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a con-sequence – a consecutive ordering in such a way that each idea determines the next as its proper outcome, while each outcome in turn leans back on, or refers to, its predecessors (p.4). (Dewey, 1933:9/4; cited in Korthagen, 2001:54)*

According to Bartlett (1990), Dewey's ideas were developed and popularised in the field of teacher education by scholars in TE, who considered the main purpose of reflection as being to make pedagogy effective in promoting student learning. Since the 1980s, reflection has become a household word in teacher education; as a result of research activities aimed at identifying good teaching activities and *professionalising* (sic) teacher education. The results of that research

changed teacher educators' views from the then widely held behaviourist theory (Korthagen, 2001; Morton et al., 2006; Malderez and Wedell, 2007).

Behaviourist theory identifies the behaviours that are deemed necessary for teachers to know and attempts to train the teachers to emulate these behaviours. This theory has its background in behaviourist psychology where learning is defined as 'lasting behaviour change' and is seen to take place by external conditioning and reinforcement by use of 'rewards and denials of rewards' (Roberts, 1998:13-14). This theory views the student teacher as a technicist who obtains knowledge and skill transmitted by experts - be they teacher educators or experienced colleagues. In this theory, what is right is decided upon by educators and implemented by the teachers (Malderez and Wedell, 2007; Zeichner, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Korthagen 2001; Johnson, 1999; Roberts, 1998;; Tomlinson, 1995)

Today, reflection is one of the most common topics in teacher education literature. Korthagen (2001) notes that 'today most professionals in the field seem to agree on the fact that reflection is a generic component of good teaching' (p.51). He explains, however, that there have been different definitions or interpretations of the term in different soci-cultural contexts in which pedagogy takes place but these differences are not necessarily ideological. Korthagen's own definition is that: 'reflection is a mental process of trying to structure or restructure an experience, a problem, or existing knowledge or insights' (p.58).A similar definition, perhaps clearer, is given by Richards (1998) who defines reflection as 'an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to a past experience and involves conscious recall and examination… as a basis for evaluation and decision making and as a source for planning action' (p.143).

In teacher education, reflection is generally interpreted to mean a deliberate endeavour by a teacher to analyse their interactions and identify any problems there in, weigh alternative activities that may be used to deal with the problem at hand, and decide on the most suitable option depending on the intended outcomes and the particular context. In doing this the teacher is enabled to be more critical of their own practice thereby forming their own perceptions. A teacher could reflect on practice by considering various dimensions of any issue that can contribute to knowledge, skills, attitudes, creativity and conflict management (Roberts, 1998).

Grant and Gillette (2006) explain that reflection means both thinking about the classroom activities and also making adjustments that could make the learning experiences more meaningful to the learners. They note that 'some teachers erroneously believe that if they spend time thinking about their teaching, they are being reflective' (p.297).These authors propose that in reflection, a teacher ought to isolate issues and challenges, read relevant publications and get different viewpoints about the issues, obtain information from her classroom, prepare appropriately for her lessons and give honest examination of self and students.

Brandt (2006) supports the reflective goal and gives clear recommendations that it may be achieved through a major change in the focus of TP.

> *Conceptions of learning how to teach need to move away from "being told" transfer approach, … towards an exploratory "finding out" or transformative*

> *approach, which includes the following characteristics: it builds on existing knowledge, allows for different learning styles, provides opportunities for problem solving, encourages autonomy, and is reflective. Within such an environment, the development of a capability of* ***critical reflection*** *(our emphasis) in action…is more likely to create meaning and learning for the novice teacher (p.362-363).*

From the foregoing, and our extensive review of literature on reflection in teacher education, we define a reflective teacher as one who endeavours to make persistent and careful consideration of self, perceptions, teaching (content and process), interactions, and challenges; against existing knowledge, theories, or insights; with an intention of obtaining sound rationale for current and future pedagogical practice, learning and/or finding more effective alternatives within a particular teaching and learning context. A reflective teacher interrogates his/her actions, with learners both within and outside the classroom. Through reflection, a teacher may address 'both everyday experiences and the societal events that influence them'. Reflection has a dual meaning which 'involves the relationship between an individual's thought and action and the relationship between an individual teacher and the society'. Reflection takes the teacher beyond thinking about what classroom techniques to use and why to reasoning about the soci-cultural context in which the teaching and learning takes place. This gives the teacher more control over his work and facilitates improvement (Bartlett, 1990).

Student teachers need to be supported to develop reflective skills as they play a critical role in the teacher's work. These skills are important for the development of analytical tools for the teaching and learning process, appreciation of the soci-cultural context, appraisal of their own behaviour and that of their learners, taking charge of their advancement as professionals; awareness of their own theories and ability to weigh them against other theories in the field; and empowerment of teachers to shape education by playing a more active role (Korthagen, 2001).

In the Kenyan context, the terms reflection and reflective teacher education or reflective teaching are still relatively new and have not featured much in the local teacher education literature. TE is still widely dominated by behaviourist approach. In TP, based on the tenets of behaviourism, many educators focus on assessment of the extent to which student teachers display the techniques taught during coursework. This theory is currently considered a narrow approach to TE in general and TP in particular because teachers are conditioned to perform actions for the sake of performance without reasoning about them and even when they are not convinced that the actions are contributing to learning of the pupils in their context. This view of teaching also assumes that there is a 'best practice' that everyone should be following and that can be objectively assessed through observation of teacher behaviour (and exam results). 'Good teaching is not just a matter of displaying certain set of behaviours, in any case, perceptions of ''correct behaviours'' change as new theories of learning emerge' (Malderez and Wedell, 2007: 12).

Current views on pedagogy in schools are based on humanistic, constructivist and to some extent soci-cultural views of teaching which tend to agree on reflection as a goal of TE. Humanistic theory of teacher education developed as a reaction to the positivist view which had asserted that there is an objective truth which can be empirically proved. Behaviourism has always been

associated with the positivist view. In teacher education, humanistic theory implies that the teacher's initiatives need to be recognised; it views teacher practice as a process of 'partnership' between educators and student teachers, a means to 'self actualisation' of the student teacher and a need to appreciate the affective feelings of teachers (Roberts, 1998:20).

Constructivist theory of teacher education is linked to cognitive psychology, especially the work of Piaget and Chomsky. Piaget posited that people learn by making their own mental interpretations of what they are taught and not simply by imitation and conditioning as advanced by behaviourists. Chomsky also criticised the behaviourist approaches to language learning and teaching and argued that learning takes place because of mental ability. The main tenet of this theory is that people can construct their own interpretations from knowledge that they are presented with and this differs from one individual to another (Roberts, 1998). In terms of TP, humanistic and constructivist paradigms would support the view that student teachers ought to be supported to learn out of the experiences during the session, to make sense out of their interactions with the learners and other members of the school community as well as educators, without being conditioned to behave as they were taught or being judged as wrong or right.

Soci-cultural theory of learning and teacher education largely draws from the works of Vygotsky(1978,1987), particularly the notion of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which posits that learning occurs through social interaction with adults and more capable peers through mediated social practice (Hawkins, 2004). The main issues raised by soci-culturalists are that learning to teach is a process of creating a social identity and also that effects of a teacher's prior socialisation - as shown in their perceptions needs to be attended to; that teaching is a social apprenticeship and teachers need to be educated to be responsible to the society and sensitive to social inequalities (Roberts, 1998; Hawkins, 2004; Grant and Gillette, 2006). Soci-cultural views on teacher education have a lot of relevance to the Kenyan context. In terms of the practicum, this is the first time (for most student teachers) to come face to face with learners, parents, other teachers as colleagues, educational administrators and perhaps members of the wider community in which the school is situated. Their guidance on how to learn from this 'practical' context is therefore important.

In line with these views and reflective teacher education, the definition of *teacher* is currently conceptualised differently in TE literature. One definition that captures this new interpretation - and which informs our understanding of the kind of teacher we ought to aspire to produce is given by Malderez and Wedell (2007). They define a teacher as:

> *Someone who provides learners with opportunities for learning, (and in the process learns themselves), plans with 'learning promotion potential' in mind…, accepts that learners already 'know' a lot which will be useful in the learning endeavour; notices the stages learners have reached, and the successes and difficulties the learners are having and uses these to make decisions about how best to be supportive (P.4).*

This definition, in our view carries most of the qualities expected of a teacher as proposed in current literature. The key concept in this definition is *learning*. That the purpose of teaching is to facilitate learning is well appreciated among most (if not all) practitioners. What is perhaps uncommon from this definition-which we emphasise, is the view that the teacher also requires to

learn in the process of teaching. Clearly, perceiving teaching in this sense confirms the fact that teaching is indeed a 'a complex open skill' (Tomlinson, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Malderez and Wedell, 2007). Consequently, it is widely agreed by scholars in education that there is no one technique, method or approach to teaching that can be said to be the best. What works in one lesson, class or context may not work in other similar situations. Any teaching act usually includes several decisions, actions and considerations and may vary from one group of learners to another. At the same time, there may be many 'right ways of teaching, even within one context'. Any phase of teacher education therefore - be it coursework or teaching practice; needs to take cognisance of the fact that teaching requires extensive, skill, knowledge, flexibility, judgement and wisdom (Tomlinson, 1995:29).

What Teachers need to learn: The concept of reflective teaching also raises questions on what teachers need to learn, in order to be effective. Teacher education literature has attempted to identify and outline what teachers are expected to learn and therefore what teacher education endeavours should be directed at. One author who categorised such knowledge, and who is referred to extensively in TE literature, is Shulman (1986,1987) as cited by Malderez and Wedell (2007, Morton et al., 2006, Imig and Imig (2006), Johnson (1999), Roberts (1998). Malderez and Wedell give a summary of Shulman's (1986, 1987) framework of the knowledge base for teachers as follows:

- Content knowledge - knowledge of the subject matter that you are teaching.
- General pedagogical knowledge - classroom management and assessment techniques.
- Pedagogical content knowledge - knowing the techniques that are available to use for teaching your subject.
- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics - your learners in general and the individuals making up the class.
- Knowledge of educational context - the education system as a whole and the school in particular.
- Knowledge of educational ends - purposes and values and their philosophical and historical backgrounds - the ultimate goals of education within the society and what education is thought to be for (2007:14).

Shulman's framework has been a subject of research and discussion in teacher education literature (Morton et al., 2006; Imig and Imig, 2006). Several writers have since modified Shulman's model or come up with different knowledge bases for teachers (e.g. Malderez and Wedell, 2007; Adams, 2006; Darling Hammond, 2006b; Richards, 1998). In this paper, we also adopt Shulman's (1987) framework since it has been found to be useful by many educators and researchers in identifying the curriculum for teacher education. We also find the conceptualisation very useful in accommodating the aspects of teacher learning as discussed in teacher education literature (Malderez and Wedell, 2007; Morton et al., 2006).

In the Kenyan context, the first two categories of Shulman's framework are covered during coursework at university; that is content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. TE programme in Kenya takes the form of *concurrent* content and pedagogy. However, we argue that they two are well knit to the point of being termed Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK).

The content is usually taught by another faculty who may not be trained in pedagogy while the pedagogy is also taught separately without integration with the content. The assumption is that the student teacher will link the two (content and pedagogy) somehow. There have been calls recently for a review of the TE programme. However, these calls have taken the form of advocacy for consecutive programmes that offer courses in content first then pedagogy, at postgraduate level. Maleche et al. (2006) report that:

> *At a meeting of the committee of Deans (2003) it was noted that although B.Ed graduands are well endowed in methodology, they lack depth in content teaching subjects. In other fora within universities, claims of poor quality B.Ed graduates have been raised. The accusation of deficiency in content is conveniently placed at the door of Schools of Education, ironically by those faculties specifically charged with teaching content… (p. 213).*

Maleche et al. (2006) present the merits and demerits of both the consecutive and concurrent approaches to TE and conclude by proposing the maintenance of the concurrent route, although they suggest a review of the curriculum. We support Maleche et al. on the need to maintain the concurrent route, but hasten to add that it is necessary to integrate content and pedagogy into PCK; for example, by consolidating the subjects and methodology into course units offered by the same faculty, preferably the school of education. In this way we can place responsibility for quality of the programme within the School of Education. A consecutive route, we argue, would widen the knowledge gap between content and pedagogy even further (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner, 2006). Without delving deep into this argument we suggest that as presently constituted, TE programmes in Kenya strongly relies on the TP phase to enable student reflect on how best to integrate the content they have learnt (from another school) and the pedagogy learnt (from the school of education) into PCK ,that is of immediate relevance to real classroom situations.

Learning through reflection during TP: We look at TP as fitting within the views on TE by Tomlinson (1995). He defines teacher learning as 'the acquisition of capacities or tendencies through action or experience…Capacities, especially from educational institutions are concepts, knowledge/understanding and skills… attitudes and tendencies'(p.9).These views are also emphasised by Johnson (1999). Johnson gives a summary of what appears to be the unanimous position about teacher learning at present, and a justification of TP:

> *Learning to teach is not a singular event, with a start and a finish. It is not limited to a particular place with boundaries that confine its growth. Learning to teach is a long term, complex, socially constructed developmental process that is acquired by participating in the social practices associated with teaching and learning. It is affected by the sum of our experiences some figuring more prominently than others. It requires the acquisition and interaction of knowledge and beliefs about oneself as a teacher of the content to be taught, of one's students and of classroom life. It is a combination of such experience, knowledge and beliefs, when situated in a context of real classrooms that form the foundations for teachers reasoning and the justification of classroom practices (1994:54).*

TP is considered an opportunity to engage student teachers in reflection about their images about teachers and teaching formed during their days as learners, their knowledge of subject matter and how to teach it, their knowledge of the curriculum and perceptions about education in general (Richards, 1998).TP is a part of teacher learning where student teachers need to be involved in discussions to 'develop their own practice in an autonomous and reflective way. Note that these are the knowledge bases in Shulman's (1987) framework that are not sufficiently covered in coursework. This can be achieved through a 'cooperative discursive approach' involving educators, student teachers, cooperating teachers and principals (Proctor, 1993:94). Proctor proposes that student teachers need to be guided in doing the following:

- Looking back in a critical way on what has already taken place;
- Building up a body of professional knowledge, related to technical,
- strategic and ethical aspects of teaching;
- Using this body of knowledge in critical ways in new situations;
- Widening the range of criteria which will influence their reflective process;
- Building p a personal set of criteria as a result of the reflective critical process (p.93-94).

Korthagen (2001) gives a tangible example of how a student teacher may reflect on a particular issue in the classroom:
As an example, let us consider a student teacher who feels she is having trouble getting her students to be quiet at the beginning of a lesson. When the lesson is over, a process can start in which she reflects on her interaction with the children. The aim of this interaction is for her to perform better in the next lesson. She can reflect on her knowledge of how to get a workable atmosphere in class (reflection on her mental structures, created by former experiences and by what she has learnt in teacher education) and on questions such as whether she actually used this knowledge and if so , how she used it and how the children reacted…The student teacher can for example, decide to read a book on teacher student interaction, and try to enlarge her mental structure…another student may have a rather different mental structure…containing the notion that books are not helpful in such situations. This is another way of saying that people's learning styles are different. (p. 59-60).

Role of Principals during Teaching Practice

Clarke and Collins (2007) explain that TP is a complex system involving several types of relationships with many people. They argue that although many TE institutions usually concentrate on student teachers and perhaps the cooperating teachers, there are other important players including principals, students, other teachers, parents and other members of the school community. 'It is not difficult to imagine a flowchart with the university at the top followed by (with directional arrows pointing down) the faculty advisor, the school, the cooperating teacher, the student teacher, and if they feature at all, the pupils at the very bottom of the diagram' (p.165). They note that this does not represent the practicum as it unfolds in our school settings.' The following statement summarises the complexity as seen by Clarke and Collins (2007:165):

> *…once removed from the physical setting of the university, the various players in the practicum have a degree of freedom … For example, the faculty and*

> *cooperating teachers constantly engage in and refer to one another for guidance, advice and direction. Student teachers in most instances, become increasingly involved in these interactions, and the possibilities for mutual learning is ever present (for example, cooperating teachers often comment on learning new ideas that their student teachers bring to the practicum from their coursework). Also, the learning that occurs in the classroom is itself multi-directional and includes pupils, the student teacher, both cooperating teachers and faculty advisors (p.165).*

In spite of this complexity, there are specific expectations from particular individuals. All the actors during TP are equally important in our view, and we wish there was enough space to discuss their roles. Since the focus is on principals, what follows is a review of how they (principals) can be more instrumental in the practicum process. Agreeably, the principals of the placement schools play an extremely important role during TP. In Kenya this role has mainly been administrative. Ayot and Wanga, (1987), in their book *Teaching Practice*, are emphatic that TP is 'a learning period for the student teacher' (p.16). They explain the rationale for TP and the roles student teachers, educators and cooperating teachers and principals are expected to play during the exercise. The following statement illustrates how the various roles are conceived during TP in Kenya:

> *…at this time the student teacher, for all practical purposes, experiences what it means to be a member of a school community, to be involved in school activities and classroom teaching. Here the student teacher is considered a teacher since he takes full control of a class or classes allocated to him and all the duties that the head of the school, the deputy head or the head of the department may deem fit to assign to him. When he is teaching, the student teacher becomes answerable to the head of his school as well as the university or college and the two institutions must coordinate with each other for the smooth running of the teaching practice. Both the university or college and the school consider him a full member of the teaching staff for the duration of the time he is in that particular school (p.11-12)*

Ayot and Wanga's explanation clearly captures the significant roles of the school principals during TP. Nonetheless, the roles shown in the statement are mainly *administrative*. There are more management related responsibilities expected of the principal during the exercise; for example, before placement, there is negotiation with the principals of the target schools on the number of student teachers they are willing to accept and in which subjects. The student teachers may be asked to indicate their preferred schools from those that will have accepted to host them. The student teacher is expected to report to the principal of the placement school.

The principal manages the TP teacher as s/he would any other staff; for instance, assignment of duties and committee membership, granting of permission to be away from school and others. It is also expected that the principal will identify one or more experienced teachers, usually referred to as cooperating teachers, to work closely with the TP teacher in terms of classroom teaching. The cooperating teacher

> *is a member of the staff who is responsible for advising the student teacher on anything from academic to extra-curricular activities that may be required of*

> *him or her…with the help of the cooperating teacher, the student teacher would be given his timetable indicating the subjects he is expected to teach and the periods when he would have to teach them. Again, with the help of the cooperating teacher, the student should then begin to prepare his scheme of work on the subjects he is to teach as provided in the syllabus' (Ayot and Wanga, 1987:11)*

The principal, through the cooperating teacher is also usually relied upon by the university or teacher training institution to monitor the progress of the student teacher in actual teaching and other aspects of development such as sense of responsibility, teamwork and relationship with students. The principals also submit reports to the university, usually after consultation with cooperating teachers indicating an assessment of the student teacher's rating as a teacher. In this role, they play the dual role of immediate guide to the teacher and school based assessor. The reports the schools write on the student teachers are usually of great value to the TE institutions in making the overall assessment (Ayot and Wanga, 1987; Brown and Nacino-Brown, 1990).

The broader role principals in TP: The administrative roles of the principals serve extremely crucial functions. Nevertheless, we see the need for a broader role of the principals to include pedagogical or instructional support, mentoring, and induction into the profession; which are perhaps the most important since the main reason the students are placed in those schools is to learn to be more effective in their pedagogy.

Pedagogical support: Literature on TE reports that placement schools offer differing levels of support, with consequent emotional feelings for the student teachers involved. In the extreme, two sets of schools may be identified, those which do not support the TP teachers and those which do (Liston et al., 2006). Johnson et al. (2004) give characteristics of institutions that support student teacher practice:

> *They have principals who are instructional leaders and who develop personal relationships with new teachers; they give new teachers appropriate and reasonable assignments; they provide sufficient supplies and equipment to support student learning; they have reasonable and consistent policies and infrastructure; they use teacher's time well; they establish school wide standards for student behaviour; they provide coordinated student support and services and they build bridges with parents. In addition…schools with an integrated professional culture are crucial to beginner teacher' development…there are no separate camps of veterans and novices; instead, new teachers have ongoing opportunities to benefit from knowledge and expertise of their experienced colleagues (p.159).*

In playing this role, principals of the placement schools need to remember (and remind their regular staff) that it is not realistic to assume that practicum teachers will perform at par with experienced teachers in terms of practical knowledge of subject matter and general pedagogy. In the same vein, it is not fair to blame TE programmes for failing to produce graduates who are ready to take full teaching responsibility immediately they get to schools. 'The process of preparation (of teachers) is an extended one, involving seamless transitions between preparation

and practice; where university faculty and experienced teachers collaborate to ensure beginning teachers thrive and grow' (Imig and Imig, 2006:287).Teacher education may not necessarily make student teachers ready for 'the emotional drama of the classroom' (p.32). TP needs to be viewed as an invitation to the novice to continue learning to become a teacher (Intrator, 2006: 32).

Consequently, it is unfair for principals of the teaching practice schools to 'assign novice practitioners the most difficult students…with the least support' (Imig and Imig, 2006:287).These authors suggest that 'it would be considerable if new teachers were treated as novice practitioners "ready to learn" with reduced assignments, limited expectations and supportive mentoring (ibid). Most student teachers expect that the schools where they will do their practice will be supportive and considerate. The challenge to both TE institutions and principals of placement schools is to facilitate conditions in which teacher learning and/or development will be enhanced ((Imig and Imig, 2006).

Mentoring: In our framework of the broader role of the principal, we wish to suggest that the principals also perceive themselves as mentors. The term mentor; however, is quite problematic; it has been used by various writers to mean various types of people (Malderez, 2007; Derrick and Dicks, 2005). Malderez (2007) points out that the use of the term 'mentor' involves a lot of terminological confusion. In this context, we use the word *mentor* to mean one of the senses in Derrick and Dick (2005); that is 'someone who guides you in a more structured way (p.10). In a TP context, this role is traditionally supposedly played by the cooperating teacher. From our own experiences as student teachers and educators, we suggest that the principal takes a more active part in the 'mentoring' process without leaving it entirely in the hands of the cooperating teachers, some of whom leave the student teachers on their own as soon as they report to the schools. As mentors, some of the specific roles the principals would play directly, or facilitate through cooperating teachers, include these from Derrick and Dicks (2005:16):

- To inform a trainee about learners' basic skills and learning needs, e.g. pace of teaching, learning goals, additional learning needs.
- To negotiate realistic learner/trainee contact hours.
- To know the TP requirements of the course in terms of placement hours and observation schedule.
- To maintain responsibility for the class during lessons.
- To liaise with trainee teachers' course tutors.
- Do formal observation and offer constructive feedback and comments on teaching orally and informally (p.16)

Perhaps some principals already play or facilitate some of these roles; but our experience shows that most of them do not. Indeed some consistency and coordination is required if this role has to benefit the student teachers. Bodóczsky and Malderez (1996) precisely explain that mentors are expected to play a 'model' to the student teacher. This involves a mutual reflection on experiences to develop a deeper understanding of teaching and learning with the ultimate aim of improving practice. The mentors therefore ought to have the ability 'to see, record, and subsequently "hold up the mirror" for the student teacher to see again, or see differently, the

events of the lesson' (p.66). The authors also suggest that the mentors' role needs to be clearly explained to the student teachers so that there are no undue conflicts or tensions.

Emotional support: The student teachers on TP all over the world, Kenya included face a lot of challenges making it necessary to get consistent emotional support from principals, among other people. Some of these are discussed by Liston et al. (2006), based on research findings on pre-service practicum teachers and those on first year of teaching. They identify some of the highlights of these challenges as follows:

> *They work to develop humane, yet efficient routines to manage the daily business of classroom and school life…they try to fend off fatigue, seeking to balance career demands with activities and connections that rejuvenate. They grapple with the absurdities and paradoxes of school bureaucracies, choosing when to critique and resist ill-framed policies and practices. They stumble in some interactions with colleagues, administrators and parents. They wonder why their trying work and hard won accomplishments are viewed with such low regard by the general public.*

From the findings, Liston et al (2006) identified several possible reasons for some of these challenges. First, the student teachers reported not having had enough preparation for the actual teaching life; second, they experienced conflicting emotions associated with the dual process of teaching and learning; also, the placement schools were at times not conducive and supportive enough for their learning. Consequently, Liston et al. report that the novice teachers they studied showed lack of practical skills to manage classrooms, make decisions regarding curriculum implementation, design and or choose appropriate teaching and learning materials and strategies for effective pedagogy.

Even where the TE programmes are very elaborate and have supposedly thoroughly prepared their student teachers for their TP and novice year, they still have to do with a heavy work load including lesson planning, marking of assignments and continuous assessment tests, attending departmental and staff meetings, sometimes having to answer questions by parents, being on duty and having to participate in co-curricular activities. While one might argue that most teachers, even experienced ones usually face heavy workload with its emotional consequences, as Liston et al. argue correctly, the new teachers 'have not yet honed efficient and consistent approaches to routine tasks so that they can focus their attention on matters more deserving; thus every aspect of a teacher's workload is time consuming and cumulatively exhausting' (Liston et al., 2006).

Intrator (2006) presents four main emotional challenges that student teachers are likely to face during TP. The first challenge is that of being humble and to portray the desire to seek support from experienced teachers in the spirit of 'commitment to inquiry and willingness to learn from error' (p.233). Second is that of how to deal with the 'dramatic range of emotions and passions that they are likely to face' (p.235); third is that of how to handle learners and fourth is that of taking care of the 'health and spirit' (p.238). He argues that 'any teacher cannot teach children well if they are demoralised or bewildered…If our beginning teachers have no strategies for retaining their enthusiasm, rejuvenating their energy, bouncing back from the inevitable dark

day, then they will suffer. High impact teaching hinges on the presence, energy, and skills of the teacher' (p.238). To help student teachers deal with the emotional drama, Intrator suggests the need for respect and support of the student teachers by principals, educators and cooperating teachers in the placement schools, to guide them. He also proposes that they be given a chance to discuss their experiences. In this way, we also concur, the student teachers will have a chance to appreciate the supposedly difficult emotional issues as teething problems that form an important stage in their learning to fit into the teaching profession. Principals in Kenya are usually experienced teachers who have not only had their share of emotional problems of a professional nature, but have also witnessed many teachers go through them. In view of this, they could directly engage teachers in counselling sessions, formally or informally or facilitate relevant guidance and counselling activities for them.

Induction into the profession: Here we mean supporting the student teachers to begin to reflect upon their responsibilities as professionals and the subsequent expectations of the broader school community about their disposition. It is essential during TP to give the student teachers the chance to take part into the entire school programme. 'This kind of participation helps prospective teachers understand the broader institutional context for teaching and learning and begin to develop the skills needed for effective participation in collegial work on school improvement throughout their careers' (Darling Hammond (2006: 309). This however, is best achievable if there is a functional relationship between the principal and the student teacher. But it goes beyond a personal relationship; the principals could also play a better inductive role ensuring that their schools are close to model educational centres in which teachers demonstrate exercise shared visions, a sense of professional unity and encourage cooperation with and development of their new staff through shared learning and regular meetings.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have reviewed the current perspectives on teacher education which illustrate the need to mould student teachers into reflective practitioners. The skills of reflection; however, cannot be taught and assessed in coursework but are best developed in a collaborative framework where student teachers are supported to reflect upon their experiences and construct their own understanding and adjustments. As we have seen, T P is perhaps one of the most important phases of TE and a highly appropriate opportunity to mould the teacher into reflective professionals. Considering the large numbers of student teachers in Kenyan universities and the relatively strained resources, educators on their own would not be able to effectively achieve this. Consequently, there is need to involve principals of the TP schools. As the head of the administrative unit on the ground, professional colleague, and stakeholder; the principal could contribute to the process of moulding a reflective teacher by taking on a broader responsibility that goes beyond management of procedural matters and includes additional roles of pedagogical support, mentoring emotional and induction of the student teachers into the profession.

These could be done through direct interventions by the principals or by facilitating appropriate programmes through cooperative teachers and other structures. Central in this broader role is perhaps a need to have in place functional networks of organisational communication. To enable principals play this broader role effectively, we suggest that there is need to establish stronger links between teacher TE institutions and schools and finding forums to discuss the knowledge base for teaching and the broader role principals could play in supporting student teachers to

reflect on the challenges that they are likely to encounter as they come face to face with the complexities in the teaching profession. Through forums such as conferences and organisations like the Kenya Association of Educational Administration and Management, the principals, educators and other practitioners can communicate a shared responsibility, understanding, strategy and language for inducting teachers into the teaching profession in Kenya.

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