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Original Article

Querying the Application of University-Acquired Employability Competences among Fresh Secondary Teacher Education Graduates in Uganda

Richard Rwabuhinga¹, Christine Margaret Okurut Ibore¹, Muweesi Charles^{1,2*}, Faith Mbabazi¹, Mary Kagoire Ochieng¹, Jessica Kabasiita³, Tomusange Robert³ & Edmond Kagambe³

¹ Uganda Christian University, P. O. Box 4, Mukono, Uganda.

² Busitema University, P. O. Box 236, Tororo, Uganda.

³ Mountains of the Moon University, P. O. Box 837, Fort Portal, Uganda.

* Author for Correspondence Email: cmuweesi@gmail.com

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*Graduate
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The study investigated the application of university-embedded teaching skills in teaching and Learning by Fresh Education graduates in Mid-Western Uganda. It employed a qualitative method of data collection and analysis. This cross-sectional narrative found that teachers express themselves positively about the training they received while at the university, through innovative teaching methods, the quality application of the professional Code of Conduct, and sharing social experiences that motivate them. This is achieved by building strong relationships with students and helping learners recognise their abilities to the fullest by fostering creativity through confidence in them. Their adherence to proper classroom management as well as their promotion of a safe learning environment to enhance good teacher-student relationships. However, prior classroom management could lead to other pre-social disengaging and destructive behaviours that could be detrimental to learning and fresh teachers need to adopt and encompass preventive and responsive strategies to support and facilitate both social and emotional learning in the classroom. In Conclusion, institutions, more so Universities, need to emphasize the teaching of the latest pedagogical skills that enhance a whole round Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSE) teacher such as Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving, Emotional Intelligence, and Human Resource Management, among others with supportive and continuous Guidance and counselling among the students taught to build and enhance a high level of Academic Performance.

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INTRODUCTION

The change in the economic situation the world over has been mired with advancement ranging from the adoption of new technologies that attract special skills with the skilled staff/workers that have got the acquired knowledge forced modern skills as well as relevant competencies to meet the current institution and industrial demands (Tagulwa et al., 2023). The changing partners of the quality of employees are highly mounted with several skills that are needed by the employees throughout their career life and the world over, employability is becoming a great challenge considering the quality of skills graduates exhibit during formal employment (Rahmat et al., (2012).

Employability is shaped by many factors, however, education and more so in developing countries where universal education takes a major shape is it is referred to as a great determinant for students' employment (Pheko & Molefhe, 2017). Today the gap between the skills required in the job market and those possessed by individuals raises a lot of questions, especially with the poor pedagogical training embraced by most universities in most developing countries (Matovu, 2018). In other words, the education offered has not exhibited the best graduate expectations, attitudes and skills for the world of work. Whereby many graduates are not adapting to the new changing work trends that

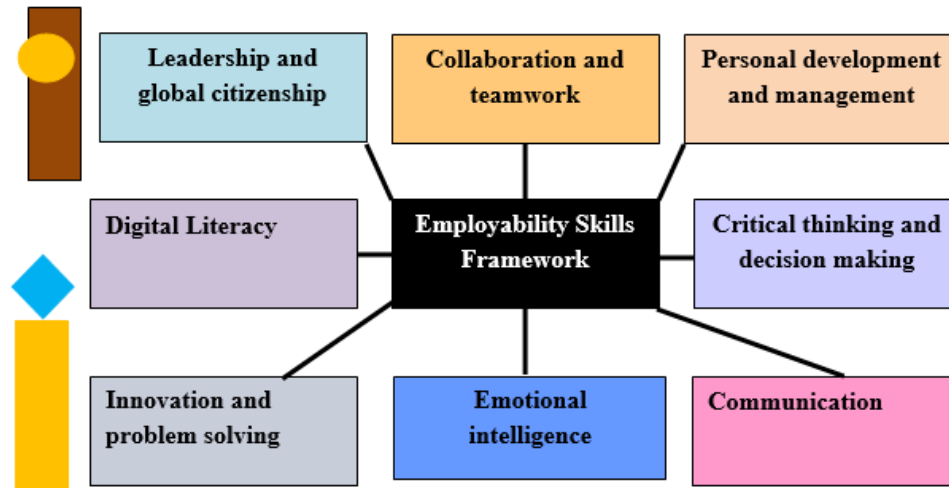
require the usage of ICT gadgets (Kintu et al., 2019).

Theoretical Background

The study was guided by *The Employability Skills Framework*. It describes a set of nine key skills, organized into three broad categories: Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships, and Workplace Skills. The Employability Skills Framework was developed in 2012 as part of the Support for States Employability Standards in CTE and Adult Education project, an initiative of the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education of the United States of America. It includes a set of skills that are crucial for preparing graduates for the workplace, which are applied academic skills, interpersonal skills, personal development, critical thinking, resource management, Digital literacy, communication, innovation and problem-solving, Leadership and emotional intelligence. The Employability framework is very crucial in this study, as it gives us a background of the various employability competencies that are important among graduate teachers of the twenty-first century. As per the employability framework, these competencies enable graduate teachers to meet the expectations of their employers; school administrators, and other education stakeholders. Therefore, it is imperative to explore what graduate

teachers and administrators perceive as important competencies for a graduate teacher (Jackson et al., 2013).

Figure 1 Employability Skills Framework



Adapted from Jackson, D., Sibson, R., & Riebe, L. (2013)

Employability is an issue of concern in many areas of the global economy, but in this context, the focus is on students and graduates in Ugandan higher education. According to Matovu (2018), employability consists of four main elements which include a person's employability assets which consist of his/her knowledge, skills and attitudes; deployment which includes career management skills, presentation which is concerned with job-getting skills, and work experience. Pheko and Molefhe (2017) continue to point out that for a person to be able to make the most of his or her employability assets, a lot depends on his/her circumstances and external factors such as the current level of opportunity within the labour market. Employability has been defined as an individual's ability to gain and maintain initial employment, move between roles within the same organization, obtain new employment if necessary, and/or generally secure suitable and sufficiently fulfilling work (Tagulwa et al., 2023).

Similarly, Rahmat et al. (2012) defined employability as a graduate's potential for obtaining and succeeding in a graduate-level job placement.

Overall students' ratings of employability skills were proportionately lower than employers' ratings. This demonstrates a lower level of confidence in the student's preparedness to join the world of work after graduation. This creates a gap in the understanding of the employability skills that are needed between students and employers. The gaps between the skills demand and supply lead to negative employment outcomes such as working for less than expected income rates and lower job positions (Ariyawansa, 2008).

When employers were asked about which employability skills are required to make a student employable, they gave the following skills: subject knowledge and skills, practical skills, inquiry and research skills, collecting, analyzing and organizing information, resourcefulness, critical and analytical thinking skills, adopting skills learnt to new situations, ability to work independently, willingness to learn, positive attitude towards work, collaboration and teamwork, and ability to engage with others as important employability skills in determining students employment outcomes (Torres-Machi et al., 2013).

Tertiary education in Uganda is characterized by a persistent mismatch of skills between what is taught and the requirements in the labour market (Juha, 2013). Uganda's post-University qualifications are not adequately skilling young people, and thus many graduates are unable to find jobs due to their poor skill sets, despite the achievement of tertiary qualifications. Indeed, according to the World Bank's Enterprise Survey for Uganda, about 30 per cent of firms surveyed stated an inadequately skilled workforce as the most important constraint inhibiting growth. The education system in Uganda is creating a mass of young people who do not have the skills required for employment or self-employment (Roodt, 2005).

While the employability of school graduates is one of the most important success factors of an education system, most graduates leave schools without the skills and attributes that employers need (The Observer newspaper, February 17, 2018; Daily Monitor, Wednesday, June 7, 2017). Specifically in the education sector, the country is plagued with several teachers who are unemployed. While personal circumstances and appropriate level qualifications are vital in making the transition from school to work (Impetus, 2014), employability skills and competencies are paramount when it comes to making young people employable. It no longer suffices to have academic credentials as the ultimate desirable goal in a young person's education.

Problem Statement

In Africa, almost half of all the graduates churned from higher learning institutions are unemployed (Bbaale et al., 2023). The Accra-based African Center for Economic Transformation a policy think tank predicts that this could get worse in the coming years as a result of the increasing automation. The current mismatch between the education systems and the prevailing labour market needs has been discovered as one of the major root causes of the looming level of graduate unemployment in Africa

(Obonyo, 2019). In Uganda, the unemployment rate for Uganda's post-University graduates is 80%, which is one of the highest in the world. Recent data released by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) show that 9.3 million youths are neither in education, employment or receiving training. At least 41 per cent of youth, which represents 9.3 million ranging from the ages of 18 and 30 years are not engaged in any productive activity, according to a survey finding contained in the Uganda Labor Force, (Peter, 2023). Consequently, universities are now under attack for the difficult labour market transition of their graduates. However, the factors underlying graduate unemployment could as well be competence-based which has many times seemingly ignored, (Ssempebwa, 2006).

According to Tuyizere (2012), graduates of education programmes roam the streets and those who are lucky and are employed have to undergo training to bridge the huge knowledge and skills gap left over from university training. This description is a clear indication of the unemployment situation experienced by several graduates. In several private schools where some of the graduate teachers are recruited, major concerns have emerged about the quality of teachers being trained in universities (Monk, 2007). There is a public outcry that the majority of teachers who graduate from colleges and universities lack practical skills, professional ethics, content and methodology to apply in classroom teaching. This was the motivation behind this study which aimed to explore how competence influences Bachelor of Education graduates' employability skills after leaving Ugandan universities. It specifically aimed to examine how graduates' prospects for employment in Uganda are influenced by the acquisition of competence as acquired through the higher education system (Tea & Ser, 2014).

This has been supported by evidence from employers in public and private secondary schools in western Uganda, indicating that graduate teachers have failed to exhibit relevant competency-based

skills (Namubiru et al., 2024). These include; critical thinking, analytical skills, designing lesson plans, and schemes of work, pedagogical skills assessment practices, communication skills, teamwork, and punctuality. This is happening amidst various efforts from the government of Uganda through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) has partnered with social partners such as UNDP and initiated the Uganda Graduate Volunteer Scheme (UGVS). It aims at enhancing young graduates' employability and bridge their transition to work (Kamuhanda, 2019, New Vision). The required employability skills set competencies are still evidently in shortage across the national spectrum of sectors, however, this study particularly, focused on graduates of Education employed/teaching at Mountains of the Moon and the Uganda Pentecostal University in mid-western Uganda.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Human Capacity and Competence of Graduates

The concept of human capital is assumed to consist of an individual's skills, knowledge, capabilities and experience with the ability to improve them through individual learning (Dess & Picken, 2008). An individual is required to possess certain skills and abilities to perform a given task efficiently and in a satisfactory manner (De Vos et al., (2011). These skills used to perform a given task such as critical thinking and problem-solving can be called competencies which are acquired or learnt by individuals to be applied where necessary (Kulal et al., 2023). Belchior-Rocha et al. (2022) highlight that the purpose of education lies in equipping students with competencies that they can transfer across diverse contexts. Boahin and Hofman (2013) observed competence is a dynamic process where an individual is not only able to skillfully carry out a given task but is also capable of developing and transferring skills in different contexts. Competence is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context and applying the learning outcomes in personal and professional contexts

(Rosen et al., 2019). Aliu and Aigbavboa (2019) suggest the concept of human capital as a pillar of strength within the job market and determines an organization's competitiveness and profitability.

A study conducted in Malaysia found that developing human capital by investing in higher education enhances the competency level of graduates to meet the challenges in a competitive job market (Ma'dan et al., 2021). It relates to the capability and commitment of individuals' views from skills, experience, potential and capacity in an organization. The concept of competence involves assessing individual performance which includes the aspects of knowledge, skills and personal characteristics that enable an employee to perform specific tasks effectively (Jackson & Jamieson, 2009).

Employability Skills of Bachelor of Secondary Education Graduates

Fadumo (2017) studied educational levels and unemployment rates in Uganda with the use of descriptive statistics frequencies and percentages. Results revealed that the more the individuals are trained and acquire higher educational levels, the higher they are likely to have job-required skills that are needed to do work on the job. This finding hence implied that having relevant qualifications endows one with employable skills. However, this study was descriptively done while this current study will be inferentially done. Guàrdia et al. (2021) studied graduates' employability skills in East Africa. Based on qualitatively gathered data, results revealed that employability skills were mostly perceived as insufficiently developed during students' progress in their programs. Thus, it suggested that in the training, the study may not fully be equipped with the skills required as per their academic professions. A study by Moolman H. 2017 revealed that universities were doing less to provide appropriate sets of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for enhanced employability. This means with a lack of relevant conceptual knowledge; it might be difficult for one to get employed in the existing job

opportunities. Sawant and Fernandes (2019) studied institutional strategies for making graduates more employed. Results revealed that for graduates to be more employable, there must be employees to offer knowledge or make them knowledgeable to meet the demands of employment sectors. However, this study was qualitative while this current study will be more qualitative in the context of Midwestern districts.

Wedge (2004) in a study about the employability skills of teacher Education graduates with the use of descriptive analysis, found that Bachelor of Education students doing mathematics were more likely to be employed when possessed with mathematics numeracy skills. Then other skills like communication follow. However, this current study will be more inferential. Similarly, Blaxell and Moore (2011) in a synchronized development of academic employability skills and attributes at university. Results revealed that employability skills were emphasizing more use of the traditional academic skills while were highly emphasized at work. These employability skills had to emphasize academic rigour. Duignan et al. (2019) investigated teaching strategies that build the employability skills of vocational education graduates. Based on qualitative analysis results revealed that thinking skills influenced the employability of teachers.

Locally Musisi and Bukirwa Sessanga (2019) stressed that the ability to use higher-order thinking such as proficiency in comparing, contrasting, evaluating, and synthesizing without close supervision is becoming more pronounced. Students (graduates) need to adapt conceptualization, organization classification and knowledge synthesis which skills allow students to deal practically with problems of a social mathematical and scientific nature. However, this analysis was not done on university education graduates as will be the case with this current student in the realm of teacher training universities.

Suleman (2016) studied employability skills of higher education graduates. Results revealed that

students lacked the necessary skills. Further, these graduates were revealed as poorly prepared and lacking conceptual skills to be fully employed on the job. However, this study did not use purely qualitative methods as will be the case with this current study. Meanwhile, Crosta, L., & Banda, V. (2022) an analysis of whether young graduates are ready for the job market of the future in Italy. Results revealed that the 21st-century skills developed by young graduates are usually well-prepared in terms of the level of knowledge acquired during their studies. This limited their possibilities to be employed by employers. However, this study was carried out in Italy whose context was different from the case of Uganda.

Philosophical Underpinning

Interpretivist approach was adopted for this study. Interpretivists contend that only through the subjective interpretation of and intervention, in reality, can that reality be fully understood (Geertz, 1973) The study of phenomena in their natural environment is key to the interpretivism philosophy, together with the acknowledgement that scientists cannot avoid affecting those phenomena they study. They admit that there may be many interpretations of reality, but maintain that these interpretations are in themselves a part of the scientific knowledge they are pursuing. Interpretivism has a tradition that is no less glorious than that of positivism, nor is it shorter. Perceptions and experiences of the participants, while also combining the researcher's own experiences to construct and interpret a personal understanding from the collected data (Thanh & Thanh, (2015). The study explored the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on the influence of competencies and employability skills gained in the two institutions of learning. The interpretive aspect of the research is in line with this strategy, which emphasizes the ephemeral nature of knowledge and the significance of individual experiences in forming understanding.

The findings have been presented rhetorically in a manner that is both informal and personal Creswell et al. (2003). This strategy tries to preserve a sense of authenticity and effectively convey the diversity of the participants' experiences. According to the case study design, the researcher interacted closely with the subjects to get in-depth explanations of the phenomenon under study through interviews (Monk, 2007). By using interviews, I was able to analyze the research problem in greater detail and explore the opinions and experiences of the participants.

METHODOLOGY

The study enforced a case study design by exploring results gathered using both interviews and observation methods from a sample of 14 teachers who are graduates from Mountains of the Moon and Uganda Pentecostal University on the impact of the competencies on skills for employment and these were sampled purposively.

RESULTS PRESENTATION

Competencies Obtained by BSE Teachers during Graduate Training

According to Spencer and Spencer (1993), competency is an underlying characteristic of a person related to the effectiveness of individual performance on the job or the basic characteristics of individuals who have a causal relationship or a cause and effect with the criteria referenced, effective or excellent or superior performance in the workplace or at certain situations. Some of the aspects that demonstrate competence in teaching and learning include the capacity to create learning environments, the ability to adhere to professional codes of conduct, maintaining student learning in the learning process and applying innovative teaching strategies. Other competencies of competent teachers include subject matter knowledge, pedagogy, ability processes, resourcefulness, behaviour motivation, and assessment (Kenny et al., 2017).

Pedagogic Competence

Pedagogic Competence, is the ability of a person to exercise or perform a job or task that is based on skills, knowledge and attitudes supported by work by the demands of the job. Competence is always related to the ability of a teacher associated with the level of understanding of learners, learning process and self-actualization. According to Hakim (2015), pedagogical competence is the ability to manage the learning of learners including an understanding of learners, instructional design and implementation, evaluation of learning outcomes, and the development of learners to actualize their potential.

Managing the classroom environment is a broad term that encompasses the preventative and responsive strategies teachers use to support and facilitate both academic and social/emotional learning in the classroom (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Effective classroom management creates a learning environment in which students are encouraged to be engaged in lesson activities, motivated to learn and prosocial, and disengaged and disruptive behaviours that are detrimental to learning are calmly corrected (Sullivan et al., 2014). The teachers were asked about their capacity to organize learning environments and one of them was confident that the training they received at Mountains of the Moon University enabled them to become good classroom managers as she explains below;

“For me, I feel I'm very good because they trained me for those three years, I spent at campus they were really good. I learnt a lot and I learnt how to manage both large and small classrooms and all types of learners. Yes, and I learnt it and I am good at that.” (IDI -1 Male Teacher).

This teacher expresses himself positively concerning the training she received while at university and describes his ability to handle all numbers of students' classes and even all types of learners. Therefore, based on this description some

graduate teachers have positive perceptions about the competencies they acquire from the training schools as sufficient for them to maintain positive learning environments. This teacher has observed some students who admire his teaching style by imitating through words and actions used in class. As a researcher, I observed this teacher was very proud of the training received and testified that it has greatly shaped his teaching career.

Innovative teaching methods, the new competence-based curriculum requires teachers to practice more innovative and creative ways of teaching to enhance the learning of their students. In this study the teachers were asked about the way they would include innovative teaching methods in their lessons and many of them agreed that they use one or two ways to augment their learner's interest in a particular subject. The teachers were further asked about what innovative and unique teaching strategies they employ in their lessons and one of them described how she uses audio-visual aids to enhance the learning of his English language students.

"To make things light and attractive to learners, so the teacher can go an extra mile like let me a visual teaching aide, say maybe you have a play. As for me, I am a language teacher so I record a poem on my phone and I put it there and they listen. All those are innovations I use to make sure that my class is interactive and enjoyable". "Okay, like what things do I do to enhance or add on to what I already have? First is research you love anything; you have to do a lot of research. Also, I read extra and I make sure that am updated so that am not left behind. Next is to accept if I don't know something. Then I have an acceptable person to advise me and update me that this is the right way to move. Of course, I feel myself that I have become proactive in one way or the other". (IDI-3 Graduate Teacher).

This teacher describes several strategies he uses to enhance teaching for the students, these range from

using the phone to record poems as a language teacher, he emphasizes that many of these methods are aimed at ensuring that his lessons are interactive. This participant explores love for the subject as one of the prerequisites for being successful as a teacher since this can be the force behind many things that one will do to prepare their lessons. He gives an example of conducting research to learn more about the subject and accepting that there are some of those concepts unknown to him even in his position as a teacher. He concludes by showing that teachers must be open-minded so that they can be guided by others who are more knowledgeable than them. This can eventually encourage the students to be more open to learning more unknown concepts and that is the spirit of education. This implies that the more everyone learns about a subject, he or she creates a sense of urge to learn more which is true for both teachers and learners.

Similarly, another teacher describes the creative ways he uses to teach his students. There are mainly activities to increase the interaction with learners. He gave examples of using games between teachers and learners, having meals with their students, and singing for them. He agrees that these strategies have greatly impacted improving the teaching and learning environment. Therefore, teachers who create friendly environments among their learners improve the quality of the interactions and thus improve their learning experiences.

The motivation to research is teachers' research to continually improve their teaching methods and support the performance of their students. There are several times when a teacher needs to apply research skills to learn more about the subject matter of the content to deliver. This was one of the responses to the question of what unique and innovative teaching strategies teachers apply in their lessons. Therefore, teachers who can conduct research can help to deliver relevant content as a participant reflects below,

"What makes me unique is that I feel I want to learn more, and I do research I am a continuous

researcher like what I told you on campus. Because when I don't know the content, for instance, I had taught mathematics for the last three years now the O'level mathematics, now this year they gave me senior six math now do you sit and hold your hands? So I had to go to do research I got content I read it understood then I go and teach the learners so I am hard working, hardworking makes me a good teacher. Yes, then another thing I am creative I don't use the other people's notes or what my teachers used so I go ahead and read I get new content because content keeps on changing".
(IDI -1 Male Teacher)

This teacher describes the importance of research in the teaching profession, he shares how it equips him to teach even subjects that may be difficult but feel competent. The ability to yearn for knowledge makes him unique because it enables him to become flexible, and even when given various classes, he is confident to handle the class successfully. This has enabled them to become successful.

Professional Competence

Professional competence is the teacher's ability to manage the teaching and learning process. Mastery of learning materials which includes mastery of materials, curriculum, and scientific substance that houses the material, as well as mastery of the structure and methodology. The ability to master the substance of the field of study and scientific methodology, master the structure and material studies curriculum, master and utilize information and communication technologies in learning, organize studies curriculum material and improve the quality of learning through research. As a teacher exhibiting professionalism helps in dealing with all manner of students in class. The participants shared that professionalism helps them as teachers to promote discipline among students as one of the key aspects of achieving learning outcomes. Additionally, professional competencies are reflected when teachers can relate to completing

teacher tasks, such as mastering educational foundations, applying various methodologies and learning strategies, and being able to conduct research and think scientifically to improve performance. It also always supports and motivates teachers to have professional competence in carrying out their duties and continuously monitors and guides teachers in enhancing their professional competence. Participant 3 highlights the importance of listening skills in teaching in response to the question of how teachers maintain students' interest while fostering a supportive and organized learning environment, taking into account factors like classroom participation & communication. As he shared as follows,

"Of course, if you want to be a good teacher, you should expect in life that all the time you're a learner so that is why you should accept to have that listening ear to the learner whether positive or negative but a teacher is expected to listen after listening, analyze then after later you come with a solution not only for the teacher or learner because the teacher cannot advise or express and because of that anything that comes from a learner you just bounce it out. It is very important to keep that one to be a good listener to the learner to the act and after".
(IDI-3 Graduate Teacher)

He explains that to become an effective teacher then one should be able to be open to learning and to have given a listening ear to the students. Therefore, he emphasizes the importance of communication skills in teaching as this facilitates positive interactions between teachers and their learners. This is related to the study by Malcolm Forbes which states that *"Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one"*, therefore as teachers demonstrate having an open mind to their learners, they would get inspired and, in the process, fulfilling the great purpose of education. Similarly, another teacher expressed that as a teacher one needs to ensure they have prepared the appropriate content for their learners. This skill has been greatly

acknowledged by both teachers and administrators as one important practice that affects the performance of teachers and the learning process.

Professional Code of Conduct, one of the professional competencies is the ability of the teachers to practice the ethical code of conduct. The Professional codes of conduct draw on these professional ethical principles as the basis for prescribing required standards of behaviour for members of a profession. They also seek to set out the expectations that the profession and society have of its members. The teachers were asked how they manage to create a positive learning environment, one of the teachers responded by describing what he puts into consideration to ensure a smooth learning process as shared below,

“Of course, you a teacher your supposed to come when organized when you’re smart because when you just come you’re not confident there is no way the learners, will keep making noise in class and therefore you’re not having a conducive environment so you have to be smart and when you come up to be confident and you have to master your content, the custodian of what you’re going to teach because the learner might ask anything and you feel embarrassed in front of them, you have to prepare. (IDI -1 Male Teacher)”

This teacher explains the importance of physical appearance as a teacher, one gains respect when one looks presentable to the students. This respect and confidence enable the teachers to be in charge of the classroom and that learning will take place. As I interviewed this teacher, I observed that all of them were looking presentable and they were walking the talk. These kinds of teachers facilitate the instilling of discipline among learners which eventually contributes to academic performance. The teachers were also asked how to show that they adhere to rules and regulations while displaying their professionalism and approach to managing problems in practical situations. The teacher shared the following.

“That one is a journey of learning. There is professional conduct that governs us as teachers. So those are professional ethics. Of course, you use that professional knowledge as a guide to how a good teacher should look like but also you use the personal, knowledge that is not in class, so you know what to do, when to do it and how to do it. So, I can say that is the best way how comply with rules and regulations because I was trained to be in that line but also the nature-in way I was nurtured in that context. First is the dressing code, what are you teaching learners and solving there, of course indirectly you’re teaching a Learner that someone dressing up decently, you’re trying to solve the problem of immorality.” (IDI-3 Graduate Teacher)”

Participant 3 emphasizes the purpose of putting into practice the professional ethical code of conduct, for instance, the dress code can be a kind of message teachers give to their students about the importance of being decent at school. He therefore concludes that when teachers are decent it's one strategy to eliminate immorality in schools. She continues to describe how teachers communicate with students enabling them to receive guidance and counselling which eventually helps them to resolve any uncertainties in their own lives in and out of school.

Social Competence

Social competence is the ability of teachers/lecturers to communicate and interact effectively with students, staff, parents/guardians of students, and surrounding communities. The Social competencies include the ability to communicate effectively and empathetically with the parents of learner's students, fellow teachers, staff and community, contribute to the development of education in schools, contribute to the development of education at the local, regional, national, and global and make use of information and communication technologies to communicate and developing the student's behaviour, in addition to

the need to have a pedagogic competence, personality and professional competence is also needed competencies related to social activities (Social competence). A teacher, according to Sergis (2018), is a mentor who builds trusting relationships with students; an orchestrator of individual and community learning; ignites pupils' creativity; connects bits and pieces of information and activities into a meaningful whole; recognizes and deploys his own and others' abilities to the fullest extent possible a teacher must be able to fulfil all of these functions as one of the participants explained.

"I have learnt that once a learner is always a learner. As a teacher, I removed that post of becoming a teacher and I put one of the learners so that we dance to the same tune. To see that am superior maybe learners will start fearing me seeing that am on a new level and I fail to give them what they require from me as a teacher I have learnt that when you want to rescue the situation you have to put off the coat to resemble that person you want to rescue so that all will be good. (IDI-3 Graduate Teacher)

This teacher describes how he expresses social competence at school through being able to effectively communicate appropriate messages to students. He emphasizes the ability to express empathy which enables him to interact with students openly. Therefore, building such trusting relationships cultivates meaningful learning, ignites creativity and confidence and can enhance student performance.

Personality Competence

Personality competence is a personal ability that is steady, stable, mature, wise, and dignified, and is a role model for students and has a noble character. (National Education Standards). Meanwhile, according to Hakim (2015), personality competence is a personal competence that reflects a steady, stable, mature, wise, authoritative personality, becomes an example for students and has a noble character. Personality competence enables a teacher

to apply both positive and negative reinforcements to enable learners to freely open up. The teachers were asked how they manage classrooms to foster positive learning environments, and how to develop good relationships with students to promote a great student-teacher relationship one of them shared,

"You have to be friendly with the learners otherwise like I told sometimes we administer punishments another day you have to come when you're friendly to them so that they are close to you they don't be shire to ask questions. Administering punishments doesn't mean you use only canes you can tell them to write the statement and put it in his or her file just writing the statement, no and sometimes you may write the statement or you can give the learner something to do outside you're going to sweep the classroom for three days, it's also a punishment. The new curriculum is the competence-based curriculum here they don't emphasize caning in this curriculum and we use statements every learner has his file so we keep writing, they write statements and we keep them when your statements are many that's when we ask you to the school..." (IDI -1 Male Teacher)

This teacher explores creative ways he uses to maintain discipline in his class, for example, he believes the use of corporal punishments should not be depended on to instil discipline among students. He identifies methods like enabling students to write apology letters as he expresses that *you can tell them to write statements and put them in his or her files*. He goes ahead to acknowledge that the new competence-based curriculum encourages more creative ways of promoting discipline among students.

Passion for teaching, similarly, the passion a teacher has, can be one of the factors to improve learning among students. Passionate teachers are characterized by excitement about ideas that can change the world for the better, enthusiasm that can make a difference in the achievement of learners and commitment to their intellectual capacities and

work performance. Thus, passionate teachers always seek to bring about change not only in their teaching profession but also in promoting learning. Some of the participants shared that even if all the other key aspects that promote learning exist if the teacher lacks passion for teaching, then it would limit the kind of impact s/he will have in terms of supporting the students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Perceptions of Graduate Teachers on Competencies Obtained during Graduate Training

Pedagogic Competence, is the ability of a person to exercise or perform a job or task that is based on skills, knowledge and attitudes supported by work by the demands of the job. Competence is always related to the ability of a teacher associated with the level of understanding of learners, learning process and self-actualization.

Other scholars like Fauziyah et al., (2020) described it as the ability to comprehend learners, plan and implement learning, assess learning outcomes, and develop learners to realise their unique potentials are all examples of pedagogical competencies. The performance of teachers can be seen from the ability of a teacher to carry out good learning management, such as planning teaching and learning programs, the ability to implement or manage the teaching and learning process and the ability to assess the teaching and learning process is also very crucial to meet the goals of teaching and learning.

Participants shared about the need for teachers to create supportive learning environments as a key aspect in influencing learning outcomes. Some teachers expressed themselves on the importance of the learning environment as one key factor in improving the learning outcomes of students. They shared that even the best teacher might have challenges with implementing their very well-designed lesson plan to support their students if the learning environment is not the perfect one for them to deliver. Epstein et al. (2008) referred to

classroom management as strategies teachers use in the classroom to create an environment that supports student learning. Behaviour management is about school climate, whereas classroom management is about the classroom environment. School climate can influence the classroom environment and vice versa (Osher et al., 2010).

The classroom management strategies of individual teachers are critical for creating a positive learning climate, although will be most effective when there is a consistent school-wide approach that provides a shared understanding of the classroom learning environment (Oliver et al., 2019). Another study by Sergis et al. (2018) emphasized the relevance of the teacher as a manager of the learning environment and that instructors need to set up learning environments and tools that can show and grow students' abilities. A teacher, as a mentor who builds trusting relationships with students; an orchestrator of individual and community learning; ignites pupils' creativity; connects bits and pieces of information and activities into a meaningful whole; recognizes and deploys his own and others' abilities to the fullest extent possible a teacher must be able to fulfil all of these functions (Masenje, 2024).

Effective classroom management creates the conditions needed to support optimal student learning. In this study, the ability to manage classrooms appropriately was one of those dominant views shared by the key informants. This was also emphasized by Sullivan et al. (2014) that classroom management needs to focus on creating learning environments that reduce inappropriate behaviours, such as disengagement from learning and low-level disruption, and encourage students to adopt appropriate behaviours, such as engaging in lesson activities, being motivated to learn and being prosaic. The importance of the student-teacher relationship was also identified as an important aspect of the teaching and learning process. This was also corroborated in the study by O'Connor et al. (2011), that there is evidence to suggest a two-way relationship between student-teacher

relationships and student behaviour in the classroom: student behaviour can influence the quality of the student-teacher relationship, and the quality of the student-teacher relationship can influence the behaviours a student exhibits in the classroom. It can be challenging for teachers to establish and maintain low conflict and close relationships with students who are disengaged or disruptive in the classroom.

Professional competence is the of mastery learning materials which includes mastery of materials, curriculum, and scientific substance that houses the material, as well as mastery of the structure and methodology. The ability to master the substance of the field of study and scientific methodology, master the structure and material studies curriculum, master and utilize information and communication technologies in learning, organize studies curriculum material and improve the quality of learning through research. As a teacher exhibiting professionalism helps in dealing with all manner of students in class. The participants shared that professionalism helps them as teachers to promote discipline among students as one of the key aspects of achieving learning outcomes. Additionally, professional competencies are reflected when teachers can relate to completing teacher tasks, such as mastering educational foundations, applying various methodologies and learning strategies, and being able to conduct research and think scientifically to improve performance. It also always supports and motivates teachers to have professional competence in carrying out their duties and continuously monitors and guides teachers in enhancing their professional competence. Teachers who can conduct research can help to deliver relevant content. This was also emphasized by Fransisca (2019) that experienced teachers always strive to improve their quality and update their knowledge continuously. Various studies have shown that there is a significant influence between teacher professionalism on learning success and student achievement.

The process by which individuals continue to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes over their lifetime. A teacher who continues to enrich themselves with knowledge is likely to reflect a similar influence on their learner to practice the same behaviour. Teachers shared several ways they dedicate themselves to lifelong learning, leadership abilities, and upholding moral principles in their classroom practices. These included being supportive, sharing their experiences, and giving assessments. Professionalism is also the commitment of members of a career to improve their professional abilities and continuously develop the strategies they use in carrying out work according to their profession. One of these strategies is continuous learning to improve their mastery of the subject content, knowledge and skills (Fransisca, 2019). Indicators used in the measurement of the social competence of teachers include the ability to communicate and interact effectively with students, fellow teachers' education personnel and the parents/guardians of the students and the community.

Personal competence is personal capacity reflected through the personality of a solid, stable, mature, wise and authoritative, role model for students, and being noble. Personal competence includes the ability to present oneself as a person who is steady, stable, wise, and adults as well authoritative, present yourself as a person of good character and as an example to students and the Community, and develop a self-sustainable manner. This resonates well with a quote by John Strachan that states "To this end, the greatest asset of a school is the personality of the teacher. "It implies that the way teachers treat their students is an important aspect of teaching and learning. This is also similar to another quote by Sidney Hook who said: *"Everyone who remembers his education remembers teachers, not methods and techniques. The teacher is the heart of the educational system."*

This was also highlighted by Komara (2007) who stated that personal competence includes being

steady, noble, wise and prudent, dignified, stable, mature, and honest, becoming role models for students and the community, objectively evaluating their performance, and developing themselves independently and sustainably. In this study, the head teachers emphasized that the personality competence of the teachers enables them to exhibit professional skills. They gave examples of practising the teacher's ethical code of conduct which helps teachers create healthy boundaries between themselves and their students a high-performing teacher is also one who can maintain healthy relationships with their students (Charles, 2021).

Similarly, the passion a teacher has can be one of the factors to improve learning among students. Passionate teachers are characterized by excitement about ideas that can change the world for the better, enthusiasm that can make a difference in the achievement of learners and commitment to their intellectual capacities and work performance (Justine et al., 2024). Thus, passionate teachers always seek to bring about change not only in their teaching profession but also in promoting learning. Some of the participants shared that even if all the other key aspects that promote learning exist if the teacher lacks passion for teaching, then it would limit the kind of impact s/he will have in terms of supporting the student (Charles et al., 2024).

Teacher commitment has been considered as a passion for the work. Passion is at the core of effective education. Day (2004) argues that passion is a need for a high-quality education. Passion encourages teachers to act as it is the source of motivation (Vallerand, 2007). For that reason, passionate teachers can create excitement for learners to achieve better. Hargreaves (1997) pointed out that without passion all pedagogical approaches fail. Therefore, the effect of passion on learner achievement has been widely appreciated in the teaching and learning process. Hansen (2001) in his attempt to define passionate teachers states that passionate teachers can encourage learners to

become more willing and accomplish better. Fink (2003) stresses that learners achieve better as long as they care and are enthusiastic about learning. Another thing that Altun (2017) says is that teaching passion and relationship goals leads to content fulfilment and psychological spirit for optimum function with full persuasive power and expressiveness as a driving force for efficient teaching, and it helps students learn more quickly.

Higher education institutions are implementing several strategies to enhance their graduates' human capital by focusing on knowledge and skills, training, internship, research, seminars, and conferences Wilson (2012). The ability to adapt to ever-changing work conditions requires not only cognitive excellence but also some general skills including adaptation; organizing; problem-solving; independence; lifelong learning; communication and interaction (Charles et al., 2021); creative thinking; working in groups; work ethics; interpersonal skills; good leadership; responsibility; responsibility; honesty; flexibility; empathy; creativity; self-management and planning (Pudyanti et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

It was established that the participants in the study held positive perceptions about several competencies that they had while training at the two universities, including the ability to manage the classroom environment, and conduct research. Additionally, they were trained to adhere to the teaching professional ethics which they adhere to, for instance, such as mastering educational foundations, applying various methodologies and learning strategies, and being able to conduct research and think scientifically to improve performance. However, it was evident that different institutions may be offering slightly differing Teacher education competencies which can then be a challenge when it comes to delivery and therefore might end up affecting the quality of learning outcomes for the students.

Several skills were highlighted by the school administrators as those that make Teachers employable such as academic skills, management, lesson planning and schemes of work, leadership, digital skills, teamwork and many others as expounded in the employability skills framework which has been one of the key guiding theories in this study. However, there was a set of skills that have been discovered by the administrators that several BSE graduates don't exhibit and this implies that the gaps in the BSE program in some universities include innovative problem-solving and critical thinking (Charles et al., 2024).

The role of the university in training BSE students in employable skills has been strongly affirmed by all the participants. It was established that the nature of training in the two Universities empowered the BSE graduates in various employable skills. And all the participants expressed having been empowered by the BSE program. However, a certain set of employability skills such as creativity, curiosity, confidence, and collaboration, among others, were not given much attention in the training of the BSE students in the selected universities.

In addition, it was established that the students established that their teaching practice experience was sub-optimal and they agreed that if given more time for hands-on teaching experience would lead to much better outcomes. Finally, some teachers indicated that varied training outcomes exist between graduates churned from different universities. This implies that the BSE graduate may not be receiving uniform training content from the various training universities, and yet this could influence the student learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Universities need to currently review the Pre-service teacher education curricula in universities to promote innovative pedagogy and other teaching methods to improve classroom management and to deal with the evolving environment in the teaching profession. These institutions need to emphasize the

teaching of certain skills that were discovered scarce among the BSE graduates like human resource management, critical thinking, problem solving and emotional intelligence. Additionally, these institutions need to conduct continuous guidance and counselling among students to enable them to maintain a high level of academic performance as it is a highly sought characteristic among employers. There is a need to emphasize holistic teaching and learning in the teacher education institutions which will enable the BSE graduates to transfer the skills to their learners. This characteristic was rated highly among the school administrators emphasizing that such teachers possess extra skills compared to others and thus make them extra-ordinary. Finally, there is a need for universities to harmonise the pre-service teacher education curriculum for BSE graduates to have uniform learning outcomes in all the institutions.

Likewise, Education Officials in Districts, Ministry, Inspectorate among others need to provide guidelines for using technology in teaching since it's one of the competencies that define the 21st-century teacher. And to ensure they are well implemented in the various schools. There is a need to organize and facilitate teacher training programs to provide refresher knowledge and skills in pedagogy to graduate teachers to improve their classroom management, especially in the era of large classes. These programs should aim at improving several competencies including mastery of educational foundations, applying various methodologies and learning strategies, and being able to conduct research and think scientifically to improve performance. To ensure implementation of policies and regulations concerning various teaching competencies for graduate teachers.

Also, School administrators need to continuously motivate teachers to practice their ethical code of conduct for teaching as they do in their daily practice. In this, it is important to ensure that teachers reflect the right moral conduct as they are key role models to the learners. Similarly, education

administrators need to position teachers in roles they are passionate about so that they can leverage the enthusiasm and commitment that follow when people engage in tasks that excite them. Similarly, education administrators need to create conducive environments to use technology in learning as it is steadily turning into one of the crucial aspects of modern teaching as a result of the evolving learning environment. In addition, the administrators need to find methods to motivate teachers who actively participate in extra-curricular activities at school since these enhance a teacher's performance. These activities have been recognized to build the intellectual capability of students and break the monotony of doing only academic work.

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