

Teaching of Geography in Uganda Secondary Schools: Reflections of Geography Teacher Trainees at the School of Education, Makerere University, Uganda

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Abstract

This paper examined the status of Geography Education in Secondary Schools of Uganda through the eyes of Geography teacher trainees. This study was based on a constructivist theory of learning. The teacher trainees with the guidance of the researcher were sent out to secondary schools in three Districts of Uganda. The eighty students in the class worked in groups of four each to carry out this study. Each group selected two schools, one well established with facilities and the other, a “third world” school which is rather deprived. The status of Geography in this study referred to the quality of teachers and students, availability of teaching materials, the teaching methods used by the in-service teachers, the learning environment, and use of technology, relevance of topics taught, availability of geography clubs and other learning activities. Results show that there is shortage of teaching materials, text books are outdated, teachers do not use interactive teaching methods, and some schools do not have qualified teachers and a general lack of well organized geography departments. They noted that well established schools with reasonable facilities are implementing the geography syllabus well and their performance in national examinations is good. Recommendations include; providing in-service courses, workshops, seminars to geography teachers in secondary schools, parents and government should work as a team to provide teaching/learning materials to schools. Schools to carry out career guidance to encourage students work hard and take their studies seriously.

Key words: Status of Geography, quality teachers, performance of geography.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is essential to the development of the human resource which facilitates the socio-economic development of a country. This is emphasised by Olaleye (2015) that education is the bedrock of societal development and every country invest huge resources in education in order to enhance socio-political, economic and technological advancement. The Council for Curriculum and Examination and Assessment, Northern Ireland (2000) emphasized that; our society today needs young people who are flexible, creative, and proactive young people who can solve problems, make decisions, think critically, communicate ideas effectively and work efficiently within teams and groups. This means the quality of education must enable teachers prepare learners develop competences that will make them self-reliant. Geography contributes a lot in this aspect. Geography is an interdisciplinary subject which is practical in nature and requires use of strategies that give the learner hands-on experiences. The discipline enables learners to meet a country’s goals of education, exposes learners to useful life skills and professional attitude that meets the global labour market demands (Ondigi 2012). Other scholars, Lambert & Morgan (2010), Kimayu (2012) add on that geography inspires the learners to think about their own place in the world, their values, rights and responsibilities to

other people in the world. Geography helps students get a variety of knowledge and information about the people of various places understand their culture and life styles and appreciate the nature's gifts. Quality of education is a function of the quality of teachers/instructors, conducive physical facilities, equipment, up to-date quality books, library, as well as a sound system of monitoring/inspecting the quality of teaching and learning. Lack of this means, constraints to geography teaching and learning in schools making it less effective. The focus of this study is to assess the status of geography teaching and learning in secondary schools of Uganda.

THE NATURE OF GEOGRAPHY

Geography is a discipline which seeks to explain the character of places and the distribution of features and events as they occur and change the surface of the earth. Geography is concerned with human – environment interactions in the context of specific places and locations, in addition to its central concern with space and place. The nature of geography is described by OFSTED (2008) as “Listen to news broadcast or open a newspaper and you cannot fail to be struck by the relevance of geography. This practical discipline enables us to understand change, conflict and key issues which impact on our lives today and which will affect our futures tomorrow. The floods in Cornwall and the destructive power of hurricanes in the Caribbean have highlighted changing climatic patterns and global warming. The devastation by the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the world's reaction has further demonstrated the power of geography. Equally, war and conflict in the Middle East, water shortages, famine, migrations of peoples, disputes over oil, the complexities of world trade, interdependence, globalisation and debt are all major issues with which our world is grappling. All this is the geography of today and, in order to understand the intricacy of it, it is important that pupils learn about the world they live in and on which they depend. It is important that the citizens of tomorrow understand the management of risk, appreciate diversity, are aware of environmental issues, promote sustainability and respect human rights and social inclusion. If the aspiration of schools is to create pupils who are active and well rounded citizens, there is no more relevant subject than geography.”(pp6-7)

The way geography is defined over time affects the way it is taught in schools and tertiary institutions. For example Edwards (1990) defined geography as a totally artificial construct that is produced in response to varying time and space; and specific social, economic and political forces. Teaching geography therefore must take into account the demands of a changing society.

GEOGRAPHY TEACHING / LEARNING

The purpose of teaching geography is to develop individuals that are responsible, know their country and can provide solutions for their problems (Akengin 2008). On the other hand OFSTED (2008) is of the view that;

“The study of geography stimulates an interest in and a sense of wonder about places. It helps young people make sense of a complex and dynamically changing world. It explains where places are, how places and landscapes are formed, how people and their environment interact, and how a diverse range of economies, societies and their environments are interconnected. It builds on pupils' own experiences to investigate places at all scales from the personal to the global”(pp7).

Other people view geography as a subject where concepts, knowledge and skills are taught; students are provided with knowledge and information for sustainable development. Effective

teaching methods are essential for successful implementation of geography curriculum. Kolb and Kolb (2001) suggest that geography being a practical subject requires that learners should relate to the environment so that they learn in that experience. This experience has different effects on learner's abilities, and active experimentation deepens their understanding of the environment they live in. This is learning by reflection on the experiences. This translates into life long learning which they will use after schooling. Lambert & Morgan (2010) adds on that school geography should be considered within the broader observation about nature and contemporary society. Similarly Hamid and Merza (2012) informs geography educators that traditional methods of teaching geography are teacher centered, effective in disseminating large amounts information. This the authors goes on, requires students to be passive learners; involving listening only. This learning environment presents a challenge in capturing and maintaining interest, securing the student understanding and retention. A challenging and meaningful learning experience ensures engagement and participation of students in learning activities. Many new visualization techniques, technology and practices in mapping have emerged. Modern modes of teaching recommended are problem solving, small group discussions, projects participation and cooperative learning;- fieldwork, role plays, games, music, these promote motivation and effective classroom management (Aikoterini 2010) Adeyemi (2008). Expected outcomes according to Lambert & Morgan (2010) are comprehensive skills and understanding of the distribution of resources. Qualitative and quantitative skills, understanding of environmental changes, as well as society and conservation of natural resources, should be of great concern in geography. Pre-service teachers' training, consequently, should include fieldwork / excursions and laboratory experiences, this practical nature of training for the core part of their career training and professional work is essential (Lambert & Morgan 2010).

THE GEOGRAPHY TEACHER

Teachers are expected to have more and more knowledge and skills to face and understand the challenges of a changing society. Teachers play a fundamental role in the development of the geography school teaching syllabus. What does it mean to be a good geography teacher? Dulama and Ilovan (2008) describes a good teacher simply as one with the attribute of understanding the essence of things; with competences, skills, ability and power of doing things, somebody's quality of doing things. They add on that one with competences using particular terminology in order to explain the geographical environment. The last attribute being one who has achieved skills and general learning methods and techniques of ICT. A geography teacher must be dynamic like the geography discipline, challenging, with a good knowledge of the learner's abilities. A teacher's competence is described as a shelter over his professionalism in doing the job of teaching. They add on that teachers' competence refers to the right way of conveying units of knowledge, application and skills to students. That is knowledge of content, processes, methods and means of conveying content. According to Omoro and Nato(2014), a good teacher is that who is creative in selecting the appropriate teaching/learning strategies that motivate the interest of his/her learner. Effective teaching depends on the competence of the teacher. Effective geography teachers use a range of approaches to support student learning;

- Create a supportive learning environment
- Encourage reflective thought and action
- Enhance the relevance of new learning
- Facilitate shared learning and experience, provide sufficient opportunities to learn, inquire into the teaching/learning relationships.

These approaches promote the following skills/abilities that employers look for and what are; dependability/reliability and responsibility, team work, positive attitudes, professionalism, willing to learn and communication skills (New Zealand Curriculum 2015). This curriculum emphasises that these key competencies promote “how skills” and relate to knowledge, attitudes and values and how skills can be used in interactions with others in different contexts. Competences of teachers are complex and changing; they look different in different context. They are developed through opportunities to use them in increasingly wide ranging and complex contexts. They support young people to become confident connected, actively involved, lifelong learners. A teacher should make geography learning fun by using a variety of materials and strategies. The teacher’s personality according to Omoro and Nato (2004) Kagoda (2009) contributes a lot to the success of a lesson by:- the nature of the dressing, voice projection, correct pronunciation, proper information, facial expression and gestures. This affects the learner’s enthusiasm to learning in the classroom.

In Uganda, when teachers leave college/university, there is little additional training after their Initial teacher training. The researcher therefore was interested in finding out how geography teachers are coping with changes taking place in the discipline and education as a whole. This is the focus of this study.

THE TEACHING / LEARNING MATERIALS

Facilities in a school promote effective teaching of geography. Geography laboratories with up-to-date textbooks visual and audio-visual teaching materials are essential for effective teaching of geography. A classroom may be converted into a laboratory which is self contained with most of materials that the teacher and students will need to utilize; box cases, magazines, racks, newspapers, maps, compass, measuring tapes, globes, atlases, etc. (Kimayu 2012). The teaching materials together with school structures and style of working affect geography teaching and learning. A field study centre is an effective geography laboratory.

TEACHING METHODS

Theoretically the following are suggested as possible geography teaching methods according to the literature review done for this study;

Lecture by teacher, Class discussion conducted by teacher, Recitation oral questions by teacher answered orally by students, Discussion groups conducted by selected student chairpersons, instructor(guest speaker), Presentation by a panel of instructors or students, Presentations by student panels from the class ,Student reports by individuals, Student-group reports, Debate (informal) on current issues by students from class, Bulletin boards, Small groups such as task oriented, discussion, Socratic methods, Textbook assignments, Reading assignments in journals, monographs, etc., Reading assignments in supplementary books, Crossword puzzles, Cooking foods of places studied, Construction of vocabulary lists, Vocabulary drills, Reflective journals or diaries, Dances of places or periods studied, Construction of summaries by students, Biographical reports given by students, Library research on topics or problems, Jigsaw puzzle maps. Flannel boards, Gaming and simulation. Flash cards, Flowcharts, Maps, transparencies, Audio-tutorial lessons , Models, Music. Field trips, role playing, Open textbook study, Class projects., Individual projects, Photographs, Laboratory experiments performed by more than two students, Use of dramatization, Student construction of diagrams, charts, or graphs. Making of posters by students, Problem solving or case studies, Puppets, Use of chalkboard by instructor as aid in teaching, Use of diagrams, tables, graphs, and charts by instructor. Use of exhibits and displays by instructor, Construction of exhibits and displays by students, Use of slides, Use of filmstrips. Use of motion pictures, educational films, videotapes,

Use of theatre motion pictures, Use of radio programs. Use of television, use of parables to illustrate, Use of community or local resources. Storytelling, Surveys. Tutorial: students assigned to other students for assistance, peer teaching, Coaching, Supervised study during class period. Use of technology and instructional resources, Open textbook tests, take home tests.

The above activities are interchangeably used in this study to mean methods of teaching. A geography teacher is supposed to use a variety of teaching strategies from the above long list, to make geography fun, interesting, motivating leading to effective learning. The teacher trainees went out to identify the teaching methods used in Uganda secondary Schools. In this study, the teacher trainees identified the methods used by teachers in both the first and third world schools.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The focus of this study was to identify and document the status of geography teaching and learning in secondary schools of Uganda through the eyes of geography teacher trainees. This was done through a fieldwork approach where the trainees had to find out by themselves what goes on in schools. A constructivism theoretical framework was used. Constructivists believe that learners must actively and profoundly process new information in order to contextually Integrate it with their prior knowledge and promote learning (Golightly and Roath 2015). Constructivism including cognitive and social constructivism, involves a shift of ownership of the learning from the teacher to the student. The teacher guides them in discovering information and constructs their own learning solving problems on their own and understands their own thinking process. The research in addition used the problem based learning approach to guide the teacher trainees to carry out this fieldwork. To Choom – Eng Gwee (2009) problem – based learning is a strategic learning design specially aimed at enhancing and optimizing the educational outcomes of learner-centred collaborative, contextual, integrated, self-directed and reflective learning. Barrows et al cited by Choom-EngGwee (2009) defines it simply as “the learning that results from the process of working towards the understanding or resolution of a problem. The problem is encountered first in the learning process.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In Uganda secondary schools can be classified as first school with all essential learning facilities and well qualified teachers. The second class schools with qualified teachers but limited facilities like teaching /learning materials. The third world schools which are poorly facilitated and are found in poor urban suburbs as well as the rural hard to reach areas which sometimes employ unqualified teachers. Both public and private schools are found in these three categories of secondary schools in Uganda. With these different contexts the researcher wanted to find out the status of geography teaching /learning situations through the “eyes” of geography teacher trainees.

THE PROBLEM

Geography teacher-trainees get knowledge of teaching theory in foundation courses and subject methods in the school of education with limited contact with secondary schools except for a period of four months of internship before they graduate as teachers (Kagoda and Sentongo 2014). Teacher educators consequently have limited knowledge of what goes on in secondary schools regarding the implementation of the school curriculum including geography as a discipline of study. The performance of geography students is not all that good and there

seems to be a problem in as far as teaching and learning of the subject and this necessitated an investigation of the possible causes, challenges and solutions to the problems facing teachers and learners. The status of teaching and learning geography in secondary schools is one of the topics in the course outline which the researcher wanted the teacher trainees to find out by themselves, that is, what goes on in schools ?.

PURPOSE

The main purpose was to help and guide geography teacher trainees find out by themselves through field work the status of geography teaching and learning in secondary schools of Uganda.

Objectives of the study

1. Find out the qualification and competencies of geography teachers in terms of knowledge, content, methods of delivery, teaching aids through the eyes of geography teacher trainees
2. Assess the learning/teaching environment in terms of infrastructure
3. Assess teacher trainee's research, pedagogical knowledge and skills

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study where interviews, observations of geography teachers in class, document analysis by the researcher of teacher trainee reports, teacher trainees focus group discussions were used in the study. The researcher used eighty five (85) geography teacher trainees in year three, first semester (2015/2016). Students were divided into groups of five each. They were instructed to visit two schools each group in the districts of Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono. The two schools included at least one school in the category of 1st or 2nd class, the other school from a third world class (deprived/poorly facilitated). The selected schools were either private or public schools. The reason behind was to enable them internalise factors affecting performance of geography from these two categories of schools.

The teacher trainees made their own choice of schools, chose a suitable topic, objectives, the methods and tools of collecting data from schools, they analysed the data and presented a report after a month. The researcher analysed the teacher trainees' reports to assess their research skills from their presentation.

FINDINGS

The teacher trainees (17 groups) formulated their own topics which included the four among others below.

- An assessment of the current status of teaching geography in Uganda secondary schools
- An assessment of teaching and learning geography in selected secondary schools around Kampala
- The current status of geography teaching in Caltec Academy Makerere and Seroma S.S
- Carry out an assessment on current status of teaching geography in secondary schools

The topics for the other groups are similar to the above statement of the topics

OBJECTIVES

The teacher trainees formulated the objectives listed below. At least each group stated three objects which guided their research:-

- Find out the methods of delivery
- Find out the technologies used

- Find out the challenges teachers face in teaching and + solutions
- To find out the performance of students in geography for the last 5 years
- Find out the mode of assessment
- Establish whether secondary schools have geography laboratories
- To investigate the availability and extent of usage of teaching resources
- Find out about ICT in geography teaching
- Establish what effective teaching entails
- Find out the extent and essence of student participation in geography lessons.
- Establish measures taken to ensure timely completion of the syllabus
- Find out the extent to which the teachers have embraced the concept of integration, fieldwork and statistical methods in normal geography teaching.
- Find out the quality of teachers
- Find out the relevance of the content delivered to learners
- Establish the diversity of cultures of the students
- Find out the innovativeness/creativity of teachers
- Establish the relationship between teachers and students
- Find out why geography is poorly done
- Find out the size of geography classes.

Statements of the purpose of this study as stated by teacher trainees

The teacher trainees statements of the purpose of the study were quite similar therefore only the most commonly stated are presented here;

- ◆ To establish the factors influencing the inconsistency in performance of geography in the secondary schools.
- ◆ Avail the public with information on the current status of geography teaching in secondary schools
- ◆ A critical assessment of the status of geography teaching in Uganda

One group made an elaborate objective and purpose of the study they did

“Geography has become more relevant towards solving current problems consisting of environment sustainability, natural resources, yet its performance in schools is gradually declining yet it is important to society. This study therefore is geared/driven towards the understanding the present day methods of teaching. This will help in knowing whether these methods are effective as far as present situation is concerned, hence leading to production of students that are competent and capable to fit in society. If not find out methods that can be used and the materials to be applied in order to make sure that teaching and learning takes place effectively (group 2).

Methods of Data Collection as stated by teacher trainees

Tools : Questionnaires, interview guides, Camera

Sampling: Random sampling of both students and teachers,

- ◆ Interviews – use interview guides
- ◆ Observation – lessons
- ◆ Documentary evidence of materials used in teaching
- ◆ Recording
- ◆ Talking school compound to assess suitability of learning environment

Findings by Teacher Trainees

Methods most commonly used by teachers in schools according to the findings of teacher trainees:-

- ◆ class discussion
- ◆ Fieldwork around the school / trips to distant places
- ◆ Brainstorming when receiving previous lessons
- ◆ Lecture method
- ◆ Question and answer
- ◆ Note taking
- ◆ Guided discovery
- ◆ Display methods
- ◆ Use of computers
- ◆ Small group discussions for HSC
- ◆ Debating

Quality of teachers and their practices

The groups presented multiple responses; therefore the researcher could not calculate percentages for each response presented below;

- ◆ Few geography teachers in secondary schools of Uganda.
- ◆ Some teachers lack enough skills; well qualified teachers are expensive for third world schools especially if not aided by government. The schools employ undergraduate students from nearby universities (there are 5 universities in the districts of Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono where the study took place; some employ senior six leavers on vocation, and others qualified teachers specialized in other social science subjects like History, Economics, religious studies etc). Some of the teachers have inadequate content and appropriate strategies to teach geography effectively. Some teachers lack proficiency in the English language used for teaching. Learning therefore is difficult since even the students have some problems with the language of instruction.
- ◆ The changing dynamics of the examination body (UNEBC) is a challenge since the format of examinations, expected questions and approaches, expected answers change constantly and teachers cannot cope with the new trends in the Uganda geography evaluation process.
- ◆ Teachers do not mark learner's notes which would otherwise help them identify learners' problems / challenges in note-making/taking.
- ◆ Teachers do not have up to date knowledge and information on new trends within the discipline
- ◆ Some teachers use abusive language to students who gave wrong answers
- ◆ Teachers use poorly drawn maps
- ◆ Team work is part and parcel of geography Agenda (One 1st world school)
- ◆ Some teachers use display methods with some materials brought in by students
- ◆ Teachers' lecture methods are presented at high speed and slow learners are left out.
- ◆ Some teachers do not motivate students by rewarding these with correct answers.
- ◆ Brought reality in class by using maps, photographs when teaching about New York.
- ◆ Limited teacher knowledge especially in private schools. They do not correct wrong answers by students. Some teachers find it difficult to teach compulsory topics like; map reading, photography, statistics and field work.
- ◆ Teachers always taught without teaching aids, dictated notes without prior explanation of the topic being taught. This is a challenge to the learners in the process of understanding the topic; "Imagine a panorama drawing that is wrongly presented to students! This needs to be corrected immediately" (one group report).

- ◆ The teachers used models of rift valley and convectional rainfall formation diagrams
- ◆ Experienced teachers who work as examiners in the Nationals promotional examinations help students to perform well in some schools.
- ◆ Some teachers are committed, they prepare lessons plans before teaching.
- ◆ Some teachers have concern for slow learners and encouraged them to keep on trying and participating in class.
- ◆ Teachers are good at managing and monitoring students especially in first world schools.
- ◆ Some teachers give feedback after assessment. They even adjust their speed of lecturing basing on the student performance.
- ◆ Some develop critical, analytical and problem solving skills in their students
- ◆ Part time teachers do not give enough time to their students
- ◆ Negative attitudes towards the subject by both the teachers and students especially: physical geography at HSC statistics in geography, continental drift theory, weathering and climate.
- ◆ Teachers use teacher-centred methods due to pressure to complete the syllabus leading to cramming
- ◆ Teacher professional development is also limited due to lack of materials, finances

Good geography teachers in some schools encourage active participation of learners; engage students in research fieldwork, give immediate feedback, use learner centred methods, correct usage of teaching resources, guiding students on career paths and this entails effective geography teachings. They even engage students in geography clubs!

Quality of secondary school students in the participating schools

According to the teacher trainees, secondary school students face some challenges which does not enable them learn geography effectively. Teachers consequently may not feel committed to teach them in some schools as presented below by the teacher trainees.

- ◆ There is a problem of absenteeism in day schools
- ◆ Some students are hardworking while others are lazy
- ◆ Inability by some students to learn quickly, they do not understand some geography concepts, no remedial classes, no library with up-to date textbooks
- ◆ Biased students, they believe geography is hard especially map reading, photograph interpretation, data collection in fieldwork.
- ◆ Students depend on teachers who dictate notes
- ◆ Poor handwriting by students, use abbreviations as a copying strategy to speed of teachers
- ◆ Diverse students background from Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Congo and Sudan, some of whom have their own unique problems as opposed to Ugandans.
- ◆ Students do not learn from their teachers instead they learn from their peers who are bright. Small group discussions in some schools have helped in learning some topics.
- ◆ Students hate reading maps, photographs and statistics. Some students are reluctant learners.
- ◆ Some girls perform poorly; “girls take themselves to be weak and have inferiority complex. Proof boys are more active in class”.
- ◆ Poor background of students, inability to understand geographical concepts/content, they are difficult to be motivated by teachers
- ◆ Students face difficulties in drawing maps and sketches, reading and interpreting maps and statistical drawings, graphs, calculating using scales

According to the teacher trainees the quality of students and the environment under which they study leads to poor performance of geography.

- ◆ Teaching materials / facilities
- ◆ A personal house was turned into a school; small classrooms, no library/reading room.
- ◆ No store rooms for keeping texts, map extract
- ◆ Some schools especially third world, have no geography laboratories
- ◆ Desks are very few in some schools.
- ◆ Difficult to get textbooks for particular topics
- ◆ Well to do schools (1st class) have textbooks, wall maps, atlases, map extracts, charts and computers connected to internet. Some schools have computer labs, power point gargets,
- ◆ Some schools have no map extracts; therefore dictate notes on map reading.
- ◆ Poor schools (third world) have limited supply of resources, no textbooks, atlases, computers and limited map extracts, wall maps, etc,
- ◆ Some schools have computers which are not functional. Even those which are functional are not used for teaching.
- ◆ No resources to teach distant places like British Columbia, countries along the Rhine River, etc.
- ◆ No over head projectors in majority of schools.

Academic performance for the last five years is poor in most schools especially those with few teaching resources. And well trained teachers.

Strategies to improve Teaching and Learning

Teacher trainees' suggestion to improve the teaching and learning included the following;

- ◆ Teachers should be paid higher salary, this will boost their morale and motivate them to stay in one school instead of moonlighting to many schools
- ◆ Teachers should update their knowledge and skills through In-service training.
- ◆ Schools should network with each other to learn from each.
- ◆ Teachers should assume the concept of lifelong learner.
- ◆ Teachers should ask head teachers funds for buying instructional materials. Geography rooms must be provided or construct geography rooms and libraries.
- ◆ Teachers should be more creative, buy personal up-to-date textbooks instead of relying on school textbooks
- ◆ Teachers should use the environment round the school for field work and parents should intervene and supplement on the limited resources.
- ◆ Teachers should integrate practical geography in teaching
- ◆ School buses should be purchased by schools to facilitate fieldwork
- ◆ Allocate more time to geography in the school timetable
- ◆ Stock school library with up to-date textbooks
- ◆ Instil in the students the spirit of hardworking and expose them to Uganda NATIONAL Examinations Board (UNEB) tactics
- ◆ Guide and counsel students with poor attitude towards geography
- ◆ Teachers should recognise student diversity
- ◆ Teachers should form student discussion groups to help slow learners through peer-teaching.
- ◆ Teachers should write schemes of work to be strictly followed

Teachers should use interactive strategies and avoid those methods that encourage cramming.

- ◆ Combat absenteeism by having dialogue with parents. Geography teachers should recognise the fact that students are not simply containers to be filled with liquids; they should be involved at their learning. Geography clubs should be formed in every school.
- ◆ “We recommend and reiterate on the significance of recognising diversity of teaching. This calls for flexibility by the teacher to suit the varying needs of the learners. Teachers should be versatile and willing to change whenever there is need to do so. Diversity calls for the use of many methods as possible to see to it that learning is effective, we mean a change in behaviour in terms of actions and value judgement”.(one group report)

LEARNING POINTS

The teacher trainees were asked to write down what they feel they gained from this research and the following are among the main learning points

- This research has helped us get a bachelors degree in education
- It provided us with detailed and authoritative knowledge of the status of geography teaching and learning in Uganda. We are sure we have benefited from this research beyond doubt.
- It promoted self-confidence of inquiry in our minds. We did a critical analysis of geographical issues.
- It helped us acquire more geographical knowledge, skills and attitudes from senior teachers in secondary schools, thereby widening our minds in geographical knowledge.
- By observing senior teachers we recorded every thing in our memory for later use.
- Observed various modes of geography approaches
- It helped us use research methods particularly action research to improve our classroom teaching of geography.

DISCUSSIONS

It is clear that there are shortcomings among geography teachers in secondary schools of Uganda. Geography teachers graduate from many universities both private and public. Some have diploma qualifications from a number of National Teachers' Colleges in Uganda. Although their programmes and courses offered at these various teacher training colleges are similar, it is difficult to tell which graduate teacher has better competences. Most of them train in colleges with no geography laboratories; even the school of Education in the College of Education Makerere University which is the oldest in the country doesn't have one. Ondigi (2012) is of the view that lack of geography laboratories at universities denies learners practical opportunity in order to perfect their personal skills for practical use in future. Traditional methods of teaching which are teacher centred as opposed to the interactive methods which are learner-centred are still used in teacher training as confirmed by (Kagoda 2009; Kagoda and Sentongo 2014; Ondigi 2012). The quality of teaching in Ugandan secondary schools is made worse by the fact unqualified teachers; undergraduates, teachers with no geography content at a higher level, students on vocation are employed to teach geography!. The English language is a problem to both teachers and the students they teach. The geography teachers do not experience continuous professional development at all which would expose them to all emerging issues such as new technologies in education, new curriculum changes, changes in governance and leadership, the emerging 21st century skills in education since geography is a dynamic subject which changes in time and space. Practical geography and Paper one (a physical Geography content course), and Uganda a course offered at higher school certificate level are not effectively taught. The physical and cultural environments around the schools are underutilized. Geography teaching is oriented toward memorizing; there is lack of creative and

independent thinking, severe and deficiency in geography methods. Akengin (2008) argue that “existence of many terms, concepts and place names within the content of geography course also renders it difficult for students to learn large amounts of knowledge that requires memorizing rendering it an unattractive course. The content of geography, Akengin (2008) adds, should be functional answering the needs of society, reveal the skills of individuals, be flexible, and determine the details of the subject in the light of the developments and changes introduced by the developing technology and science. Lack of use of appropriate local examples by teachers to help foster understanding and arouse interest in the subject is another limitation in geography teaching. There are no regular in-service courses offered to geography teachers therefore they are also outdated. A professional teacher to be effective must become a career long learner of more sophisticated pedagogies, form productive collaborations with colleagues, parents, community agencies and businesses. By remaining a lifelong learner a teacher will ably deal with the complexities of the 21st century learner.

Methods of teaching used by geography teachers in the sample schools are still traditional. Interactive methods are used by a few teachers. This is expected since teacher educators in teacher training colleges and universities do not use interactive methods which are learner centred (Kagoda and Najuma 2013). Teachers normally use methods of teaching which they themselves experienced as they were being trained (Kagoda 2010; Kagoda and Itaaga 2013). Regarding teaching aids, teacher trainees observed that only a few have teaching aids including relevant up to date textbooks. Textbooks were written in Europe and published outside Uganda. That is books on the Rhine lands, North America and Africa were published before the current curriculum was written. Some geography teachers have written what is called “pamphlets” for students to use to answer external examinations but these are not comprehensive and their source of content is questionable because some information is wrong, in other words source of information for the majority of geography teachers with no access to internet is impossible. Atlas maps are not available for over 90% of the students in over 85% of the schools and colleges and this is similarly observed by Adenogba (2011) in Nigeria. Geography, consequently is taught at a high level of abstraction in spite of the numerous concepts, ideas, and place names that students have to cope with.

The teaching environment is good in the well established first world schools but the situation is not good at all in third world schools whether government or private schools. Some students reported that ‘a residential house was turned into a school’, some classrooms were built out of wood or papyrus materials, there is overcrowding in classrooms originally built for 40 students but now occupied by over 50. There are no spaces to store geography teaching materials in some schools. According to the teacher trainees there are problems in teaching geography in some schools in Uganda as ably narrated by teacher trainees above. This was similarly observed in Turkey by Akengin (2008) in following summarized way; lack of competent teachers, reluctant learners, inadequate teaching materials, inability to get fieldwork done, lack of giving sense to geographic aspects and of intellectual development of students in terms of geography, school leaders do not see the sense of using fieldwork, and failure to read maps or locate places.

The teacher trainees have the knowledge and skills of doing research as evidenced above, what they need is continuous practice to perfect their skills. They have pedagogical knowledge according to the kind of critic they made about the teacher quality, quality of students, methods of teaching, etc. They also stated clearly what they learnt out of the exercise they did in the three weeks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Geography teachers in secondary schools of Uganda need to be exposed to continuous professional development to upgrade their content knowledge and pedagogical skills by the government, through collaboration with teacher training colleges or other schools in the region where they are located. Continuous professional development of teachers should be on the agenda of the Ministry of Education Sports science and technology. This should be accompanied by close monitoring/inspection of schools, with the headteacher being on- the-ground office in charge of monitoring teaching

Society today needs youths who are flexible, creative and proactive who can solve problems, think critically, make decisions, communicate ideas effectively and work efficiently within teams and groups. Students need to have opportunities to develop personal capabilities through well rounded education. For this matter a variety of interactive methods of teaching must be used by geography teachers.

Networking with other teachers in other schools, collaboration with communities around the schools, parents participations, and regular inspection of schools are other pathways to improving school geography in Uganda.

Up to date textbooks and other teaching materials should be acquired for schools by government and the parents.

Teacher training colleges, proprietors of schools and government of Uganda should endeavour to provide adequate equipment, facilities and amenities for teaching and learning geography.

Research and fieldwork should be compulsory in all teacher training colleges, empowering the teachers with skills of reflection and action research.

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