Pre-Service Teaching Patterns, Challenges and Opportunities during School Attachment Practicum in Rwanda

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Abstract

This study examined the school attachment experiences of student-teachers in Rwanda through a qualitative content analysis of 80 school attachment reports from alumni of the University of Rwanda–College of Education and the Adventist University of Central Africa, purposely sampled to ensure diversity in institutional affiliation, placement location and gender. Data was analyzed thematically, with credibility enhanced through peer debriefing, triangulation with school attachment stakeholders and a validation workshop involving key stakeholders. Findings indicate that while school attachment fosters professional growth, reflective practice and identity development, student-teachers face significant challenges, including inconsistent mentorship, limited teaching resources, logistical difficulties and emotional stress. Student-teachers demonstrated resilience, adaptability and creative problem-solving in response to these challenges. They also provided concrete suggestions for improving school attachment experiences, highlighting the need for structured mentorship programs, peer support networks, counselling services and coordinated planning between universities and host schools. The study concludes that enhancing the effectiveness of school attachment in Rwanda requires systematic, student-centered interventions that integrate mentorship, resource provision and psychosocial support.

Keywords: School attachment; teacher preparation; student teacher experience; mentorship' pedagogical challenges; school practicum.

Introduction

School attachment, often referred to as teaching practicum or student teaching, is a fundamental component of teacher education programs (Malikebu et al., 2024; Msangya et al. 2016). It serves as a bridge between theoretical coursework and real-world teaching, offering student-teachers the opportunity to apply pedagogical knowledge, develop classroom management skills and build professional identities within authentic school environments (Dampson, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2024). In Rwanda, school attachment is a mandatory and integral aspect of teacher training programs, typically taking place during the final year of study in education faculties and colleges. While it is designed to enhance professional readiness, the actual experiences of student-teachers during these placements in Rwandan context remain under-explored.

Rwandan Higher Education Council (HEC) has emphasized the importance of school attachment in shaping competent and reflective teachers (HEC, 2024). However, anecdotal evidence and institutional feedback suggest that the practicum experience is often uneven, with student-teachers encountering a range of challenges (Igiraneza, 2023; Lukman, 2021; Baartman, 2020) ranging from inadequate mentorship to poor infrastructure and limited teaching resources. These inconsistencies raise critical questions about the quality, structure, and support mechanisms of school attachment programs and their effectiveness in preparing pre-service teachers for the demands of Rwandan classrooms—particularly in under-resourced and rural settings (Tusiime et al., 2023; Batra et al., 2023).

In response, this study addressed this knowledge gap by analyzing the school attachment reports of student-teachers from University of Rwanda- College of Education (UR-CE) and Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA).

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in a combination of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and constructivism learning theory (McLeod, 2025), which together provide a robust lens for understanding processes, challenges,and success 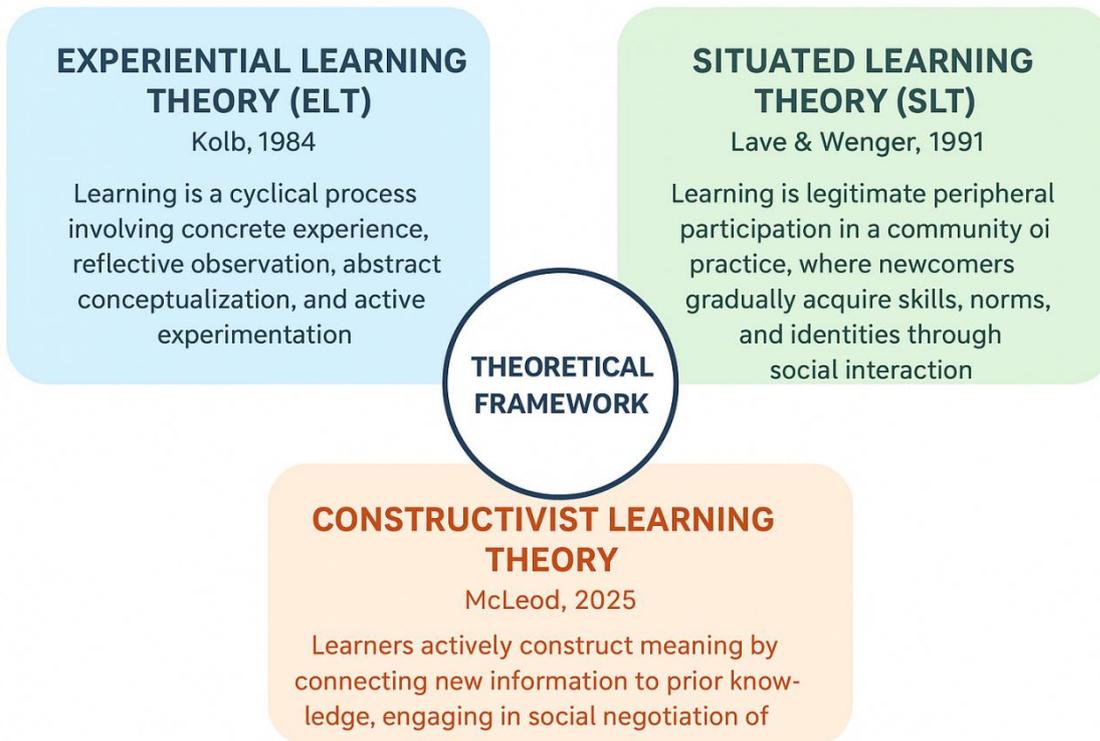experienced by student-teachers during their school attachments. Experiential learning theory posits that learning is a cyclical process involving four types of learners: converging, diverging, assimilating and accommodating. These styles are part of his experiential learning cycle, which involves four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The cycle emphasizes learning through experience, reflection, conceptualization and testing new ideas (McLeods, 2025a). In school attachments, student-teachers move through these stages as they deliver lessons, observe classroom dynamics, conceptualize better strategies and test these in subsequent sessions. ELT underscores the study's emphasis on authentic teaching experiences, iterative improvement and transfer of theory into practice.

Situated learning theory (SLT) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) views learning as legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice, where newcomers gradually acquire skills, norms and identities through social interaction. In this study, SLT explains how mentorship, collaboration with experienced teachers and participation in school routines foster professional socialization. It also sheds light on how variations in school culture, leadership support and collegial relationships influence the integration and identity formation of student-teachers.

Constructivist learning theory (McLeod, 2025) asserts that learners actively construct meaning by connecting new information to prior knowledge, engaging in social negotiation of meaning, and reflecting on personal experiences. This lens supports valuing student-teacher reflections, peer discussions and problem-solving initiatives as key drivers of learning. It also emphasizes agency, resilience and adaptability in navigating emotional, logistical and pedagogical challenges that student-teachers encounter during their school attachment.

As seen in Figure 1, integrating these theories offers a comprehensive framework for examining how student-teachers learn through practice, adapt to contextual realities and co-create knowledge, ultimately informing more responsive and effective school attachment programs in Rwanda.

Figure 1: Theoretical framework

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY (ELT)
Kolb, 1984

Learning is a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation

SITUATED LEARNING THEORY (SLT)
Lave & Wenger, 1991

Learning is legitimate peripheral participation in a community oi practice, where newcomers gradually acquire skills, norms, and identities through social interaction

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING THEORY
McLeod, 2025

Learners actively construct meaning by connecting new information to prior knowledge, engaging in social negotiation of

Literature Review

Experiential learning frameworks have been used to explain how student-teachers acquire competencies through cycles of action, reflection and adaptation (Kolb, 1984; McLeods, 2025a). These programs provide authentic contexts for student-teachers to engage in lesson delivery, classroom management and learner assessment while navigating challenges that strengthen their resilience and adaptability. Studies in Europe, Asia and North America highlight how well-structured practicum opportunities not only prepare teachers for effective classroom delivery but also foster professional identity, agency and career readiness (Darling-Hammond, 2006). However, findings from different research indicate that school attachment sites vary widely in terms of school culture, leadership support and teaching resources—factors strongly linked to school climate (Aldridge & Ala'i, 2013)—which in turn influence student-teacher adaptation and learning outcomes (Aheisibwe & Barigye, 2025).

Within Sub-Saharan Africa, practicum programs are increasingly acknowledged as both an opportunity and a challenge due to contextual realities, such as resource constraints, diverse school cultures and inconsistent supervisory structures. Situated Learning Theory by Lave and Wenger (1991) underscores the importance of mentorship and community participation in teacher preparation, yet research reveals that in many African contexts, mentorship support is inconsistent and often hindered by workload pressures on host teachers (Akyeampong, 2017). Similarly, constructivist perspectives highlight the importance of student-teachers reflecting on their practice and negotiating meaning through peer and mentor interactions (Vavrus, 2009). However, overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching resources and cultural expectations of hierarchical teacher-student relationships sometimes constrain opportunities for reflection and innovation.

In the Rwandan context, school attachment is a core requirement for teacher education, framed within national reforms to improve teaching quality and align with the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) introduced in 2015. UR-CE (2020) emphasizes that student-teachers' school attachments are critical in shaping their professional identity, though challenges such as inadequate housing, financial strain and limited mentorship support remain prevalent. A recent study highlights how student-teachers face linguistic and pedagogical challenges during attachments, including limited media

resources, inconsistent supervision and the need for more structured feedback and emotional support (Siwela, 2025). Moreover, recent studies in Rwanda highlight how experiential attachments expose students to systemic inequities, such as urban-rural divides, which shape not only their pedagogical strategies but also their perceptions of the teaching profession (Nsengimana et al., 2021).

More broadly, Sub-Saharan African research underscores the need for stronger institutional collaboration between universities and host schools to ensure that school attachments are structured, supervised and adequately resourced. For example, OER Africa (2024) argued that school-based teacher education in the region must better integrate theory with practice by ensuring continuous mentorship and reflective engagement. Studies from Tanzania and Uganda similarly point to gaps in monitoring, supervision and logistical planning that undermine the transformative potential of practicum programs (APHRC, 2024; Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). Collectively, these findings suggest that while school attachment remains a powerful avenue for professional learning, its effectiveness depends on the alignment of institutional support, local school contexts and pedagogical frameworks that recognize the lived realities of student-teachers.

Methodology

Design
This study employed a qualitative content analysis design to explore student-teachers' experiences, challenges and suggestions during their school attachment placement in Rwanda. The approach was chosen because it allows systematic interpretation of textual data and identification of emerging patterns and themes relevant to teacher training and professional practice.

Population and Sampling
The population comprised alumni student-teachers who had graduated from teacher education programs at two Rwandan higher learning institutions: the University of Rwanda–College of Education (UR-CE) and the Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA). These institutions were purposely selected to represent public and private higher education providers, thereby enhancing institutional diversity. From a population, 80 school attachment reports were purposely sampled, 40 from each institution. Selection considered key variables, such as geographical diversity (urban and rural placements), institutional affiliation and gender balance. This ensured that the sample reflects diverse placement contexts and perspectives.

Instruments
The primary data source was school attachment reports written by student-teachers after completing their school attachment. These reports documented pedagogical reflections, professional relationships, mentorship experiences, logistical challenges and personal growth narratives. The reports were retrieved by contacting former students directly and, where necessary, through peer networks. Each report was anonymized prior to analysis.

Validity and Reliability
Credibility and trustworthiness were ensured through multiple strategies. A coding framework was developed using both deductive (literature-informed) and inductive (data-driven) processes. To enhance the reliability, coding was conducted manually and verified through peer debriefing sessions among the research team, with inter-rater agreement sought to minimize bias. Triangulation was achieved by incorporating supplementary insights from school leaders and mentors, which contextualized and validated student-teacher narratives.

Additionally, a validation workshop was organized on 21 July 2025 at the University of Rwanda–Gikondo Campus. Participants included host school headteachers, university leaders, school attachment officers, supervising lecturers, former student-teachers and host school mentors. Preliminary findings were presented and discussed, enabling participants to confirm accuracy, provide feedback, and suggest clarifications. This process enhanced the study's validity by ensuring that interpretations aligned with stakeholder experiences.

Data Analysis
As this study was a qualitative in nature, no statistical treatment of data was applied. Instead, data was analyzed using the thematic content analysis approach. Codes were categorized into overarching themes such as challenges faced during school attachment and

recommendations for improvement. Sub-themes included pedagogical experience, mentorship and supervision, school context and resources, integration into the school community, student well-being, transport, housing and teaching material. For suggestions, themes focused on mentorship, training, coordination with host schools, logistical support, and psychosocial support.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval and permission were obtained from both participating institutions to access and analyse student reports. Data was anonymized to protect participants' identities and findings were presented in a way that ensured confidentiality. Student-teachers' participation in sharing their reports was voluntary. The study adhered to ethical standards of respect, confidentiality and responsible reporting of qualitative research.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the key findings of the study, organized around two guiding research questions.

Research question 1: What are dominant patterns and key challenges faced by student-teachers during their school attachment?

Student-teachers reported a range of dominant patterns and challenges as below.

Pedagogical Experience

Student-teachers reported a variety of pedagogical strengths developed during their school attachment, including lesson planning, classroom management, and effective use of teaching aids. Many described improved ability to align lesson objectives with curriculum requirements and to adapt content to students' learning needs. For example, one noted, "I became more confident in preparing daily lesson plans and linking them with the scheme of work" (ST03). Another reflected, "I learned to integrate real-life examples to help students relate to the lesson" (ST17).

However, student-teachers reported significant challenges in lesson planning, applying effective teaching methods and managing classrooms during their school attachments. These difficulties were often attributed to limited pre-internship training, lack of confidence and scarcity of resources, such as textbooks, teaching aids and appropriate classroom spaces. As one student noted, "We had to plan lessons without enough books for learners, which made it hard to prepare engaging activities" (ST17). Overcrowded classrooms and limited technology further compounded these challenges, making it harder for student-teachers to deliver engaging lessons. "Teaching in a class of more than 60 students without a projector or charts was exhausting"(ST15). However, many students demonstrated resilience and problem-solving abilities, finding creative ways to manage classroom dynamics despite the limitations.

A notable strength observed in student-teachers was their adaptability. Those who encountered difficulties with classroom management or lesson planning were able to develop alternative strategies to engage students effectively. One explained, "When the students became noisy, I changed the activity to group work so that everyone was involved" (ST03). Active learning methods, such as group work, peer teaching and interactive discussions were frequently employed as successful alternatives to more traditional lecture-based teaching. Student-teachers who utilized visual aids, interactive games and project-based learning in their lessons found that these approaches not only improved students' engagement but also helped them overcome the limitations of overcrowded classrooms and scarce teaching materials. As one put it, "Even with no charts, I drew diagrams on the board and asked learners to make their own from locally available materials" (ST13).

Best practices for overcoming pedagogical challenges included structured lesson planning that emphasized flexible approaches to accommodate diverse student needs. Student-teachers recommended peer collaboration for lesson planning, where they could share ideas, strategies and resources. "Discussing my lesson plan with a colleague helped me to see new ways of teaching the same topic," (ST05) said one participant. Another best practice identified was the modeling of lessons by mentors, which allowed students to observe effective teaching techniques in action and replicate them in their own practice. Additionally, many student-teachers found that differentiating instruction—by tailoring lessons to accommodate various learning styles and abilities—was a particularly effective strategy, especially in mixed-ability classrooms. One

respondent observed, "I realized some learners understood better when I used pictures while others preferred explanations" (ST20).

Quality of Mentorship and Supervision

The support provided by mentors and cooperating teachers was a critical factor in the success of student-teachers' school attachments. While some student-teachers reported strong, consistent guidance, particularly in lesson planning and classroom management, others encountered inconsistent feedback, unclear mentor roles and delayed responses from their mentors. For instance, one student-teacher noted, "My mentor always checked my lesson plans before class and gave me corrections immediately. This made me confident in my teaching" (ST-04). In contrast, another remarked, "Sometimes my mentor was too busy to attend my lessons, so I was left unsure whether I was doing things the right way" (ST-11). These inconsistencies led to frustration and confusion, as student-teachers struggled to develop the skills necessary for their professional growth. Despite these challenges, many demonstrated independence and initiative in seeking support, taking it upon themselves to find additional resources, conduct self-reflection and engage in peer learning. As one reflected, "When my mentor was absent, I joined other teachers in the staffroom to ask questions and learn from them" (ST-19).

One of the strengths observed was that student-teachers who received proactive mentorship and regular feedback were able to make rapid improvements in their teaching practices. These students felt empowered and confident, knowing that their mentors were invested in their growth. As one student shared, "Because my mentor visited my classes twice a week, I improved my classroom control within a month" (ST-70). Many students reported that informal mentorship, such as impromptu conversations or feedback sessions with experienced teachers, was more beneficial than formal evaluations. For example, "The casual talks after class helped me more than the written evaluation forms, which felt too general" (ST-15).

Best practices for improving mentorship included structured mentorship programs with clear roles and regular check-ins, as outlined in university documents provided to students-

teachers, to ensure ongoing guidance. Students further emphasized the importance of mentor training, particularly in how to provide constructive feedback, support professional development and engage in reflective practices. One recommendation was, "Mentors should be trained on how to guide without discouraging us" (ST-12). Historically, the University of Rwanda organized training for school-based mentors and signed contracts that included allowances; however, at the time of the study, these contracts and allowances were no longer implemented. School-based peer mentorship was another valuable strategy, where student-teachers could support one another, share experiences and offer advice. As one noted, "When I struggled with lesson objectives, my peer showed me a format that worked well" (ST-21). Additionally, some students suggested co-teaching opportunities, saying, "If we could teach with our mentors sometimes, we would learn their techniques faster" (ST-09).

School Context and Environment

The physical and logistical environment of the school was another major factor that affected student-teachers' experiences. Student-teachers often faced challenges, such as insufficient teaching materials, outdated infrastructure and unfavourable classroom settings, particularly in rural or under-resourced schools. These issues, compounded by limited access to technology and internet resources, created a barrier to effective teaching. Additionally, transportation difficulties and housing issues in rural areas added to the strain, affecting students' ability to perform at their best. Despite these challenges, many student-teachers demonstrated resourcefulness and creativity in overcoming such barriers.

A strength reported by many student-teachers was their ability to innovate in low-resource settings. For example, several students used local materials, such as chalkboards, flipcharts and even natural elements to create teaching aids. As one student noted, "I used sticks and stones from the school compound to demonstrate science concepts" (ST-08). Others resorted to DIY (Do It Yourself) resources like flashcards, posters and models, which were not only cost-effective but also encouraged students to be hands-on in their learning process. For instance, one remarked, "I made my own posters from old newspapers to help

my learners" (ST-12). Many student-teachers also reported using group work and peer collaboration to maximize the limited resources available to them, fostering a sense of community and shared learning in the classroom. As one explained, "We planned lessons together and shared materials so that each class had something to use" (ST-40).

Best practices for overcoming environmental challenges included creative resource use, where student-teachers made the most of what was available to them in the classroom. Another best practice was collaborative lesson planning, particularly in schools with resource constraints. By working together, student-teachers were able to pool their resources and share ideas for low-cost teaching strategies. As one participant reflected, "If I worked alone, I would have been stuck, but planning together with colleagues gave us more ideas" (ST-15). Additionally, students who had access to community-based resources—such as local libraries or community centers—were able to enhance their lesson plans and engage their students in real-world learning.

Personal and Emotional Well-being
Personal and emotional well-being emerged as a critical concern for student-teachers. Many reported experiencing stress, anxiety and even burnout, particularly during their first few weeks of teaching. Common stressors included pressure to perform, lack of confidence, workload, homesickness and difficult relationships with mentors or school staff. One student-teacher reflected, "The first week felt overwhelming; I doubted myself every time I entered the classroom" (ST-14). Another shared, "I was always worried about how my mentor would judge my lessons, and this made me lose sleep" (ST-32). These emotional challenges often interfered with teaching performance and overall learning experience.

Despite these challenges, student-teachers reported significant personal growth and resilience. A major strength was their ability to develop coping mechanisms, such as journaling, peer support, spiritual reflection and informal mentorship. As one noted, "Writing down my daily experiences helped me release stress and see my progress" (ST-09). Others found comfort in connecting with peers: "Sharing with fellow student-teachers reminded me that I was not alone in this struggle" (ST-21).

Many also reported that as they gained more classroom experience, their confidence improved and emotional stress decreased. For example, "By the third week, I could manage the class without fear. I started feeling like a real teacher" (ST-05).

Best practices for supporting emotional well-being included the creation of peer support groups among student-teachers placed at the same or nearby schools. These informal networks allowed them to share experiences, challenges and encouragement. Some student-teachers highlighted the benefits of mentor check-ins: "My mentor always asked me how I was doing before talking about the lesson. That really helped me feel valued" (ST-28). Although emotional challenges were prevalent, student-teachers exhibited remarkable resilience and developed effective coping strategies. Best practices, such as peer support networks, informal emotional check-ins and self-care practices significantly contributed to their ability to thrive during attachments. These experiences highlight the need for teacher education programs to incorporate structured emotional support mechanisms to enhance overall well-being.

Transport, Housing and Teaching Materials
Student-teachers placed in rural or remote areas frequently cited transportation difficulties, inadequate housing and lack of basic teaching materials as major obstacles during their practicum. High transport costs, long travel distances and unsafe or temporary housing situations added stress and fatigue, often affecting punctuality and overall performance. As one student noted, "I had to walk over an hour to school every day because there was no affordable transport" (ST-14). Another explained, "We stayed in a small room without electricity, which made lesson preparation very hard" (ST-08). Additionally, a shortage of teaching aids, textbooks and ICT resources hindered lesson preparation and delivery, with one trainee commenting, "I had to borrow textbooks from pupils to prepare my lessons" (ST-21).

Despite these challenges, many student-teachers demonstrated resourcefulness and adaptability. Some created home-made teaching aids, repurposed locally available materials or collaborated with fellow interns to

share transport or accommodation. One described, "I used charcoal and old cardboard to make visual aids for my science lessons" (ST-50) while another shared, "Three of us decided to rent one small house to reduce costs" (ST-67). These actions reflect a strong sense of agency and resilience among the trainees.

Students shared a number of best practices that helped mitigate the logistical constraints. In certain schools, administrators facilitated housing by connecting students with local host families or offering space in staff accommodations. One participant recalled, "The headteacher gave me a room in the staff house, which saved me accommodation and transport money" (ST-72). Some schools prepared basic teaching kits — chalk, paper, markers, manila paper — for interns in advance, improving their ability to deliver lessons effectively. In addition, some schools offered meals to student-teachers.

An especially effective approach reported was the early mapping of available resources and infrastructure by both universities and schools. Where practicum coordinators engaged in pre-placement site assessments, they were able to identify gaps in transport and materials and make appropriate provisions or adjustments before students arrived. This was the case of the University of Rwanda-College of Education, where practicum coordinators visited the host schools before sending students-teachers. One student appreciated this process, stating, "They visited the school before we came, which helped them to have an idea of the conditions we were going to experience and customized the students' placement process" (ST-09). As for AUCA, the majority of students was placed in schools located in urban area, specifically in Kigali City in order to reduce the transport and accommodation issues.

Insights into School Practice Patterns and Challenges

The dominant patterns and key challenges experienced by student-teachers during their school attachments illustrate the principles of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) (Kolb, 1984), Situated Learning Theory (SLT) (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and Constructivist Learning Theory (McLeod, 2025), highlighting both their professional growth and the challenges encountered. According to ELT, learning occurs through active engagement and reflection and student-teachers demonstrated this by navigating obstacles such as limited pre-internship preparation, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials and restricted access to technology (ST15, ST17). These challenges required them to experiment with lesson planning, adapt teaching methods and employ creative strategies, including group work, peer teaching and project-based learning (ST03, ST13). Reflection—whether personal or through peer and mentor discussions—enabled them to consolidate learning, build confidence and develop problem-solving skills. These hands-on experiences, coupled with self-reflection and peer discussion, facilitated the development of practical teaching skills and professional confidence.

SLT emphasizes the importance of learning within authentic social contexts. Student-teachers benefited from mentorship, peer collaboration and immersion in school communities, which helped them cope with inconsistent guidance and supervision (ST11, ST19, ST70). Participation in co-teaching, informal mentorship and school routines allowed them to acquire contextual knowledge, understand classroom dynamics and negotiate the professional norms of teaching. Informal discussions with mentors and colleagues, co-teaching experiences and engagement with real-world classroom dynamics allowed them to acquire contextual knowledge and become legitimate participants in the teaching profession.

Constructivism Learning Theory highlights knowledge construction through active problem-solving and responsiveness to learners' needs. Student-teachers creatively used locally available materials, differentiated instruction and real-life examples to address diverse learner abilities and resource limitations (ST08, ST12, ST17, ST20). Student-teachers demonstrated creativity by developing DIY teaching aids, integrating real-life examples and differentiating instruction to meet diverse learners' needs. These strategies reflect an understanding that learners actively construct meaning and that teaching should respond to students' prior knowledge, interests and abilities. By transforming constraints into opportunities for adaptive learning, they demonstrated resilience and professional initiative.

Integrating these theoretical strategies shows that experiential engagement, social situatedness and constructivist strategies collectively fostered skill development, emotional resilience and practical competence. Simultaneously, the challenges experienced underscore the need for structured mentorship, resource support and targeted pre-service preparation to enhance the effectiveness of school attachments in Rwanda.

Research question 2: What are student-teachers' suggestions for improving the structure and support during the school attachment?

Student-teachers provided a range of suggestions for improving the structure and support of school attachments, emphasizing mentorship, peer support, emotional well-being, teaching resources and structured guidance. A recurring theme across the data was the need for formalized peer support networks. While many students reported benefiting from informal collaboration with peers, these interactions were often inconsistent and unstructured. As one student observed, "I could ask my colleague for advice when I was unsure, but it depended on whether they were available that day" (ST-08). Student-teachers recommended establishing structured peer support groups to ensure that they have consistent emotional and professional support, fostering resilience and improving classroom performance.

Another critical area identified was counselling and mental health support. Student-teachers frequently reported stress, anxiety and emotional strain as challenges, especially during the early weeks of teaching. One participant noted, "There were days I felt overwhelmed and alone, wishing there was someone I could talk to about my stress" (ST-14). Although students used informal coping strategies, such as journaling, reflection or talking to peers, these were insufficient to address deeper psychological challenges. Many recommended integrating formal counselling services and stress management workshops into the school attachment program to support emotional resilience.

The need for structured mentorship and reflection opportunities was another prominent suggestion. While students valued informal guidance from mentors and school staff, this support was often sporadic and lacked clear structure. One student reported, "My mentor was helpful, but sometimes I didn't know when or how to get feedback" (ST-21). To address this, student-teachers suggested formal mentorship programs with trained cooperating teachers, who could provide regular feedback, model effective teaching practices and support both professional and emotional growth. Additionally, regular reflection sessions were suggested to allow student-teachers to assess their teaching practices, learn from challenges and track their progress systematically.

Student-teachers further emphasized the importance of adequate teaching resources and well-managed school environments. Several students reported that insufficient teaching materials, overcrowded classrooms and poorly organized school systems added stress and hindered lesson delivery. As one student explained, "It was difficult to teach without textbooks or even chalks…" (ST-05). Suggestions included ensuring that schools provide basic teaching kits and maintain supportive classroom environments, enabling student-teachers to focus on instruction rather than logistical issues.

Finally, participants highlighted a need for coordinated support between universities and host schools. Joint planning, clear communication about expectations and pre-placement briefings were suggested to reduce logistical problems and provide a smoother attachment experience. One student commented, "If the university and school had discussed my placement ahead of time, I would have been better prepared and less stressed" (ST-12). This coordination would create a more holistic and supportive framework for school attachments.

Overall, student-teachers suggested creating a comprehensive support system that integrates structured peer collaboration, formal mentorship and reflection, counselling services, adequate teaching resources and strong university-school coordination. As one student summarized, "With proper guidance, support and resources, student-teachers can focus on teaching and learning instead of struggling with avoidable challenges" (ST-19).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that school attachment serves as a crucial bridge between theory and practice, offering meaningful opportunities for professional growth, reflective practice and identity formation. However, the effectiveness of these experiences is uneven, shaped by variations in mentorship quality, school resources, and institutional support.

The study concludes that while student-teachers benefit from experiential learning, their development is constrained by inconsistent mentorship, limited teaching resources and inadequate psychosocial support. These factors hinder full integration of theoretical knowledge into classroom practice and highlight the need to approach school attachment as a structured and well-supported process. In response, it is essential to strengthen mentorship frameworks through targeted mentor training, ensuring that schools provide essential teaching resources, and embed psychosocial support mechanisms to support student-teachers in navigating emotional and practical challenges.

The student-teachers' perspectives underline the necessity of positioning them as active stakeholders rather than passive recipients. Accordingly, universities and partner schools should co-design orientation and professional preparation modules, implement clear supervisory structures and provide transport, accommodation and counselling support to enhance the overall school attachment experience.

Acknowledgment

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