

Preparedness of higher learning institutions for teacher interns in Tanzania's 2028 double cohort

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Abstract

The anticipated 2028 double cohort in Tanzania is expected to increase demand for qualified secondary school teachers, thereby placing additional pressure on higher learning institutions responsible for teacher preparation. This study examines the preparedness of higher learning institutions in Mwanza Region to support teacher interns for the implementation of the 2028 double cohort. Guided by General Systems Theory, the study conceptualizes institutional preparedness as an interconnected condition involving teaching and learning resources, professional training, practical teaching experience, mentorship, supervision and institutional feedback. A qualitative research approach and case study design were employed. Data were collected from 50 participants through 20 semi-structured individual interviews and 30 participants in focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns across participants' experiences and perceptions. The study found that institutions possessed basic teaching and learning resources, but concerns remained regarding adequacy, accessibility and effective use. Professional training was considered useful but required stronger integration of theory with practical classroom experience, particularly in classroom management, ICT integration, assessment and teaching large and diverse classes. Teacher interns generally perceived institutional readiness as partial rather than complete. The study concludes that effective preparation for the 2028 double cohort requires strengthened institutional resources, practice-oriented teacher education, effective mentorship and stronger university-school partnerships.

Keywords: teacher preparation, teacher interns, institutional preparedness, double cohort, higher learning institutions, Tanzania

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1. Introduction and Background to the Study

Education is widely regarded as an important foundation for human development, social transformation and economic progress. However, access to education alone is insufficient to guarantee meaningful learning. The quality of education depends on the interaction of several factors, including curriculum, educational resources, school leadership, learner characteristics and, most importantly, the quality of teachers. Research on teacher quality has consistently shown that teacher qualifications, preparation and professional capacity are important dimensions of educational quality and learner achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). The centrality of teachers makes teacher education a critical component of education-system development. Teachers are not merely transmitters of information. They interpret curricula, select instructional strategies, assess learning, manage classrooms and respond to differences among learners. Consequently, preparing a teacher requires more than providing knowledge of a particular academic subject. It requires the development of an integrated professional knowledge base that combines subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of learners and their contexts.

Shulman's (1987) influential concept of pedagogical content knowledge provides an important foundation for understanding this requirement. The concept emphasizes that effective teaching involves transforming subject matter into forms that learners can understand. A teacher may therefore possess strong knowledge of mathematics, biology, history or languages but still require substantial professional preparation to teach those subjects effectively. The importance of teacher preparation is also evident in international research examining the relationship between preparation and teacher effectiveness. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005), for example, found that teacher preparation and certification were associated with differences in teacher effectiveness, providing evidence that preparation before entering the classroom matters for subsequent professional performance. Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2021) argues that high-quality teaching involves a broad knowledge base combining content, pedagogy and understanding of learners, together with continuing professional inquiry and learning.

These perspectives have important implications for teacher interns. An intern should not be regarded simply as a university student completing a compulsory school placement. Rather, the internship represents a transition from student learning towards professional teaching. During this period, prospective teachers need opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge, observe experienced teachers, practise instructional strategies, receive feedback and reflect on their professional performance.

The connection between theoretical preparation and practical experience has therefore become an important issue in contemporary teacher education. Zeichner (2012) argues that teacher education needs to pay greater attention to the practices that teachers actually perform. This position does not imply that educational theory should be abandoned. Instead, it suggests that theoretical knowledge becomes more meaningful when prospective teachers have opportunities to apply it to authentic professional problems. Jensen, Klette and Hammerness (2018) provide further evidence concerning this relationship. Their comparative study of teacher education programmes in Finland, Norway and the United States found differences in the extent to which coursework was connected with authentic school practice. Their findings reinforce the argument that teacher education programmes need deliberate mechanisms for connecting university learning with classroom realities. This is particularly important because classroom competence cannot be developed fully through lectures and examinations alone. The problem is consequently not simply the production of teachers but the preparation of teachers who can work effectively under the conditions found in African classrooms. Research on teacher practicum in Africa demonstrates the importance of this issue. Mtika (2011), examining trainee teachers' experiences in Malawi, found that student teachers encountered challenges associated with workload, mentoring and the implementation of learner-centred

pedagogies. The study concluded that stronger school–college partnerships and improved school-based professional support were necessary to strengthen teacher preparation.

More recent African evidence reinforces these concerns. Namatende-Sakwa, Ngware and Karisa (2025), in a systematic review of pre-service teacher practicum in sub-Saharan Africa, identify school-based mentorship, communities of practice, peer observation, reflective practice and diverse practicum placements as promising approaches to strengthening teacher preparation. Importantly, they found that the success of these approaches depended substantially on partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools. This evidence is important because it challenges the assumption that simply assigning a teacher intern to a school is sufficient. The quality of the practicum environment matters. An intern who teaches without meaningful supervision or feedback may complete the required placement period without developing the professional competencies expected from the experience.

The East African context provides an especially relevant setting for examining these issues. Education systems in the region have experienced increasing demand for access, curriculum reforms and continuing pressure to improve learning outcomes. These developments have increased expectations of teachers and consequently increased the importance of effective teacher preparation.

In Tanzania, the relationship between teacher preparation and school-based practice has attracted increasing scholarly attention. Mgaiwa and Milinga (2024), in their review of Tanzanian teacher education and continuing professional development, identify several "missing links" in the system. Their analysis highlights weak university–school partnerships and an inadequate connection between theoretical preparation and practicum. They argue that initial teacher education and continuing professional development should be treated as interconnected components of teacher professional development rather than as isolated processes. Recent empirical research provides even more direct evidence. Kyaruzi (2025/2026), studying teacher trainees' experiences of mentorship during teaching practicum in Tanzania, found that although trainees generally perceived some forms of mentor support positively, they reported weaker support in areas such as modelling, feedback and ICT integration. The qualitative evidence further pointed to limited pedagogical support and limited opportunities for teacher trainees to exercise autonomy in teaching.

The study recommends stronger professional development for mentor teachers. Similarly, Mpate's study of mentoring student teachers in Tanzania found that poor communication, inadequate understanding of mentoring practices, inappropriate mentor selection, mentors' unwillingness to engage and differences in expectations created difficulties in practicum. Importantly, that study itself used interviews and focus group discussions, making its methodological experience particularly relevant to the present research. These findings demonstrate that teacher preparation in Tanzania cannot be understood solely in terms of university coursework. Professional learning occurs through interaction among higher learning institutions, teacher educators, supervisors, mentor teachers, secondary schools and teacher interns themselves. The issue has become particularly significant because of Tanzania's anticipated 2028 double cohort. Government planning documents identify the 2028 transition as an important education-sector issue and recognize the need to prepare for increased requirements relating to teachers, infrastructure, teaching and learning materials and other resources.

The Ministry of Education's strategic planning also includes teacher internship as part of its teacher-development agenda. The double cohort therefore creates a distinctive institutional challenge. If two cohorts enter Form One simultaneously, secondary schools may experience increased pressure on classrooms, teachers, instructional materials and school management. Teachers entering these schools will need to be professionally prepared not only for ordinary classroom responsibilities but also for potentially larger and more diverse learning groups. This makes the preparedness of higher learning institutions a significant research problem. Preparedness should not be understood simply as the existence of teacher education programmes. An institution may have an established teacher-education programme but still have inadequate laboratories, libraries, ICT facilities, teaching materials, practicum arrangements or mentoring systems.

The present study focuses on higher learning institutions in Mwanza Region. It investigates whether these institutions are sufficiently prepared to support qualified teacher interns in anticipation of the professional demands associated with the 2028 double cohort. The study is particularly concerned with three questions. First, are adequate teaching and learning resources available for preparing teacher interns? Second, does professional training adequately prepare interns for the practical demands of secondary-school teaching? Third, do teacher interns themselves perceive their institutions as ready to support them for the anticipated transition?

Statement of the Problem - Tanzania is preparing for an important transition in secondary education associated with the 2028 double cohort. The transition is expected to create additional demand for secondary-school places and consequently for teachers, classrooms, teaching and learning materials and related educational resources. Government planning recognizes the importance of preparing the education system for this transition. The teacher component of the transition deserves particular scholarly attention. Increasing the number of secondary-school learners requires an adequate supply of teachers, but numerical expansion alone does not guarantee quality. Teachers entering the system need to possess sufficient subject knowledge, pedagogical competence, classroom-management skills, assessment skills and professional confidence. International evidence suggests that teacher preparation is an important determinant of teachers' professional effectiveness. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005), for example, found evidence linking teacher preparation and certification with teacher effectiveness. Darling-Hammond (2021) further argues that teaching quality depends on an integrated knowledge base involving content, pedagogy and understanding of learners. The African evidence raises additional concerns. Mtika (2011) found that trainee teachers experienced difficulties involving workload, mentoring and the application of learner-centred approaches during practicum.

More recently, Namatende-Sakwa et al. (2025) found that effective practicum in sub-Saharan Africa requires strong mentorship, reflection, peer learning and partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools. These concerns are directly relevant to Tanzania. Mgaiwa and Milinga (2024) identify weak university-school relationships and inadequate theory practicum connections among the important weaknesses in Tanzanian teacher education. Recent Tanzanian empirical evidence further strengthens the concern. Kyaruzi's study found that teacher trainees experienced limitations in mentoring, particularly regarding modelling, feedback and ICT integration. Mpate likewise found communication problems, inadequate mentoring knowledge and divergent expectations among participants in the practicum process. The implication is that the preparation of teachers for the 2028 double cohort cannot be based only on increasing the number of graduates. It must also address the quality and relevance of their professional preparation. However, there remains limited empirical evidence concerning the preparedness of higher learning institutions specifically in relation to the 2028 double cohort. Existing Tanzanian research has contributed substantially to understanding teacher preparation, practicum and professional development, but the specific question of whether institutions are adequately preparing teacher interns for a major anticipated increase in secondary-school enrolment remains insufficiently examined.

Purpose of the Study - The purpose of this study is to examine the preparedness of higher learning institutions in supporting qualified teacher interns for implementation of the 2028 double cohort in secondary schools in Mwanza Region. The study has three following specific objectives:

- i. To assess the availability of teaching and learning resources in higher learning institutions for supporting qualified teacher interns for implementation of the 2028 double cohort in secondary schools in Mwanza Region.
- ii. To examine the adequacy of professional training provided to teacher interns by higher learning institutions for implementation of the 2028 double cohort in secondary schools in Mwanza Region.
- iii. To assess teacher interns' perceptions regarding the readiness of higher learning institutions to support them for implementation of the 2028 double cohort in secondary schools in Mwanza Region.

2. Literature Review

The present study examines the preparedness of higher learning institutions in supporting qualified teacher interns for the implementation of the anticipated 2028 double cohort in secondary schools in Mwanza Region. The literature review is therefore organized around the three specific objectives of the study: teaching and learning resources, professional training, and teacher interns' perceptions of institutional readiness. General Systems Theory provides the theoretical foundation for linking these three areas. The theory views an organization as a system consisting of interconnected components whose performance depends partly on their relationships with one another (von Bertalanffy, 1950; Caws, 2015). In the context of this study, resources represent important system inputs, professional training represents a central system process, while teacher interns' perceptions provide feedback about the functioning and readiness of the system.

General Systems Theory was developed principally through the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy. Von Bertalanffy (1950) argued that complex phenomena should be understood as organized wholes rather than simply by examining their individual components in isolation. His systems perspective emphasized relationships, interdependence and interactions between a system and its environment. Caws (2015) explains that systems theory provides a way of understanding complex entities in terms of relationships between their components rather than treating each component as an isolated phenomenon. This perspective is useful in the present study because institutional preparedness involves several related conditions. Adequate teaching materials, for example, may be of limited value if lecturers are insufficient or if teacher interns have inadequate opportunities to practise using those materials. Similarly, strong professional training may have limited impact if teaching practice is poorly supervised. In this study, the inputs include teaching and learning resources and institutional support. The processes include professional training, teaching practice, supervision and mentorship. The expected outputs are teacher interns who possess the competencies required for effective secondary-school teaching. Feedback is obtained from teacher interns, lecturers, administrators and other participants. The system can then use this feedback to adapt its preparation practices. This interpretation is consistent with recent scholarship applying systems thinking to education, which emphasizes the importance of understanding educational institutions as interconnected systems rather than isolated units (Memarian & Doleck, 2025).

Availability of Teaching and Learning Resources - Teaching and learning resources constitute an important foundation of teacher preparation. Resources include classrooms, libraries, textbooks, laboratories, ICT facilities, teaching aids, internet connectivity and other materials used to facilitate teaching and learning. The importance of these resources arises from the fact that teacher interns cannot develop practical teaching competence entirely through theoretical instruction. From the perspective of General Systems Theory, teaching and learning resources represent inputs into the teacher-education system. However, the existence of an input does not automatically mean that the system is adequately prepared. The resource must be sufficient, accessible, functional and appropriately integrated into the training process.

Darling-Hammond (2000) demonstrates that teacher quality is associated with the conditions under which teachers are prepared and supported. This suggests that institutional preparedness should not be assessed only by counting teacher interns or examining graduation rates. The quality of the institutional environment also matters. Shulman (1987) provides a further explanation. Teachers require pedagogical content knowledge the ability to transform subject knowledge into forms that learners can understand. Developing this knowledge requires opportunities to engage with teaching materials, demonstrations, practical activities and classroom situations. The availability of resources is particularly important for science and technology-related teacher preparation. Teacher interns preparing to teach subjects such as biology, chemistry, physics and geography may require laboratory equipment and practical materials. Similarly, teacher interns in other subjects require appropriate textbooks, reference materials and digital resources.

ICT resources have become increasingly important because digital technologies can support lesson preparation, access to teaching materials, communication, and assessment and learner engagement. However, ICT

availability should not be confused with ICT competence. Teacher interns need opportunities to use technology for pedagogical purposes rather than merely having access to computers. This distinction is important in Tanzania, where institutional resources may vary considerably. An institution may possess ICT facilities but still have insufficient equipment for the number of students enrolled. Similarly, a library may exist but have inadequate current textbooks. Consequently, the present study examines not only whether resources are present but also whether participants perceive them as adequate for teacher preparation.

The resource question becomes even more significant in relation to the anticipated 2028 double cohort. If secondary-school enrolment increases, higher learning institutions may need to prepare additional teacher interns. A larger teacher-education population may place greater pressure on existing laboratories, libraries, classrooms, computers and teaching materials. General Systems Theory therefore suggests that increased demand in one part of the education system should be matched by corresponding adjustments in system inputs. Failure to increase institutional capacity may weaken the quality of teacher preparation. Tanzanian literature supports this concern. Mbalamula (2016), for example, found that student teachers experienced challenges related to infrastructure, large classes and other contextual conditions during teaching practicum. These findings demonstrate that institutional and school resources can influence the quality of practical teacher preparation. The present study therefore investigates whether the resources available in higher learning institutions are sufficient to prepare teacher interns for the expected demands associated with the 2028 double cohort.

Adequacy of Professional Training - To examine the adequacy of professional training provided to teacher interns by higher learning institutions for the implementation of the 2028 double cohort in secondary schools in Mwanza Region. Teacher preparation should therefore address subject knowledge, pedagogy, classroom management, assessment, lesson planning, inclusive teaching, communication and professional ethics. Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge provides an important theoretical explanation. According to Shulman, effective teachers need both subject-matter knowledge and knowledge of how to teach that subject. A teacher may understand a mathematical principle, for example, but still require pedagogical knowledge concerning how learners are likely to misunderstand that principle and how different teaching strategies can be used to address those difficulties. The literature therefore challenges a narrow understanding of teacher preparation that focuses primarily on academic content.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) found evidence that teacher preparation and certification are associated with teacher effectiveness. Their findings support the argument that professional preparation should be considered an important component of teacher quality. However, research from Tanzania suggests that this relationship between theory and practice is not always sufficiently strong. Mgaiwa and Milinga (2024) identify weaknesses in university-school partnerships and the connection between teacher preparation and teaching practice. They argue that stronger institutional relationships are needed to bridge the gap between what prospective teachers learn at university and what they experience in schools. This issue is important for the anticipated 2028 double cohort. Teacher interns may have to teach larger and more diverse classes than those they encountered during ordinary teaching practice. They therefore require professional preparation that is responsive to realistic school conditions.

Training in classroom management is particularly important. Large classes can create difficulties related to learner participation, behaviour management, assessment and individual attention. Teacher interns therefore need opportunities to practise strategies such as cooperative learning, group work, formative assessment and efficient classroom organization. Mentorship and supervision are also part of professional preparation. Mbalamula (2016) found that mentor teachers and school managers played important roles in supporting student teachers during practicum, although challenges related to feedback, infrastructure and large classes affected the experience.

The quality of mentorship is also important. Mpate's research on student-teacher mentoring in Tanzania identified problems involving communication, mentor selection, expectations and understanding of mentoring roles. This suggests that simply assigning an intern to a mentor does not guarantee effective professional support. Professional training should therefore be understood as an interconnected process involving classroom instruction,

practical experience, supervision, mentorship and reflection. From a systems perspective, professional training represents the transformation process through which institutional inputs are converted into teacher competencies. The present study consequently examines whether professional training provided by higher learning institutions is sufficiently practical, relevant and responsive to the expected demands of the 2028 double cohort.

Teacher Interns' Perceptions of Institutional Readiness - Teacher interns' perceptions are important because readiness involves confidence as well as institutional provision. An institution may provide a course in classroom management, but interns may still feel unprepared to manage large classes if they have had insufficient practical experience. Research on teacher preparation has demonstrated that the transition from theoretical knowledge to professional practice can be difficult. Shulman's (1987) work suggests that teachers must develop the ability to transform knowledge into pedagogically useful forms, while Tanzanian studies have identified challenges in practicum, mentoring and university-school relationships. Mbalamula (2016), for example, found that student teachers encountered challenges during practicum involving large classes, infrastructure, supervision and assessment. Such experiences can influence how teacher interns evaluate their own preparedness.

The literature demonstrates substantial international evidence concerning teacher preparation and teacher quality (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). It also demonstrates the importance of pedagogical content knowledge and the integration of theory and practice (Shulman, 1987). African and East African scholarship has increasingly examined teaching practicum, mentorship and school-university relationships. Tanzanian research has identified challenges involving resources, practicum, mentoring and university-school partnerships (Mbalamula, 2016; Mgaiwa & Milinga, 2024). The present study addresses these gaps by examining the availability of teaching and learning resources; the adequacy of professional training; and teacher interns' perceptions of institutional readiness.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach and a case study design to examine the preparedness of higher learning institutions in supporting qualified teacher interns for the anticipated 2028 double cohort in secondary schools in Mwanza Region. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and explanations concerning institutional resources, professional preparation, and readiness. Qualitative inquiry is particularly useful when researchers seek a detailed understanding of social and educational experiences within their natural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of institutional preparedness within the specific context of Mwanza Region (Crowe et al., 2011). The study involved 50 participants: 20 participated in individual semi-structured interviews, while 30 participated in focus group discussions (FGDs). Participants comprised higher learning institution administrators, lecturers and teacher interns. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with direct knowledge and experience of teacher preparation, teaching practice and institutional support. The sample was guided by information richness and the relevance of participants to the study objectives rather than statistical representation. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and FGDs. Interview questions addressed the availability of teaching and learning resources, adequacy of professional training, and teacher interns' perceptions of institutional readiness. FGDs provided an opportunity for teacher interns to discuss shared experiences, identify common challenges and compare different views. Using both methods allowed methodological triangulation and strengthened the depth of the evidence. Data were analyzed thematically following the principles proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved familiarization with transcripts, initial coding, development and review of categories, identification of themes, and interpretation of findings. Trustworthiness was strengthened through credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability procedures, including triangulation, careful documentation, reflexivity and detailed contextual description (Nowell et al., 2017). Ethical principles were observed through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and secure handling of research information. Participants were identified using codes rather than names.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented and discussed according to the three specific objectives of the study. The analysis based on four broad areas of concern including availability and adequacy of teaching and learning resources; professional preparation and practical teaching experience; mentorship and supervision; and teacher interns' perceptions of institutional readiness as following.

4.1 Availability and Adequacy of Teaching and Learning Resources

The first objective examined the availability of teaching and learning resources in higher learning institutions for supporting teacher interns in preparation for the anticipated 2028 double cohort. The analysis suggests that the institutions had several basic resources, but participants consistently distinguished between the presence of resources and their adequacy, accessibility and effective use. Administrators and lecturers generally described their institutions as having classrooms, libraries, textbooks, ICT facilities and other instructional materials. However, teacher interns were more likely to emphasize shortages, competition for available facilities and difficulties accessing resources when many students needed them at the same time.

During the interview, one of the teachers noted

The institution has the basic resources, but they are not always enough for the number of students. Sometimes several students have to share materials, and this affects the time available for practice.
(INT-L4 July, 2026)

Another teacher intern explained:

We have computers and other facilities, but sometimes it is difficult to get enough time to use them. We are expected to use technology in teaching, but we need more opportunities to practice." (INT-TI6 July 2026)

The focus-group discussion similarly emphasized the difference between institutional provision and actual accessibility by noting that

The resources are available, but not always in the amount we need. When many students want to use the same facility, some of us finish the course without enough practical experience. (FGD-TI2 July 2026)

These accounts suggest that preparedness should not be assessed simply by asking whether an institution possesses particular facilities. The more important question is whether those facilities are sufficient to support meaningful learning for the number of teacher interns being trained. This interpretation is consistent with Darling-Hammond's (2000) argument that teacher quality is associated with the quality of teacher preparation and the wider conditions supporting teachers' professional development. Her analysis found that teacher preparation and certification were among the strongest correlates of student achievement across the states examined. The implication for the present study is that expanding the number of teacher interns without simultaneously strengthening the institutional conditions under which they are prepared may create a quantitative increase in teacher supply without an equivalent improvement in teacher quality. The issue is also connected to Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge. Teachers do not simply need knowledge of their subjects; they need to learn how to transform that knowledge into explanations, demonstrations, activities, and learning experiences appropriate for particular learners. Such competence is difficult to develop when teacher interns have limited opportunities to work with teaching materials and practice pedagogical techniques. The findings therefore point to a resource-capacity problem rather than a complete resource-absence problem. This distinction is important for planning the 2028 double cohort. If higher learning institutions are expected to prepare larger numbers of teacher interns, the capacity of classrooms, libraries, laboratories, ICT facilities and other learning environments must expand accordingly.

The concern is particularly relevant to ICT. Contemporary teacher preparation increasingly requires prospective teachers to understand not only how to operate digital tools but also how to integrate technology into teaching. Evidence from Tanzania reinforces this concern. Kyaruzi's recent study of teacher trainees' experiences during teaching practicum found that trainees perceived some aspects of mentorship positively but reported weaker support in modelling, feedback and ICT integration. Thus, ICT preparedness should be understood as both a resource issue and a pedagogical issue. Providing computers without ensuring that teacher interns have sufficient opportunities to use them for lesson preparation, presentation, assessment and learner engagement does not necessarily produce digital teaching competence.

From the perspective of General Systems Theory, teaching and learning resources constitute important system inputs. Von Bertalanffy's systems perspective emphasizes that system components cannot be adequately understood independently because their effectiveness depends on their relationships with other components. In this study, resources interact with lecturers' competence, curriculum content, teaching practice, supervision and the number of teacher interns being prepared. A shortage in one component can therefore affect the performance of the wider teacher-preparation system.

4.2 Professional Training and the Theory–Practice Relationship

The second objective examined the adequacy of professional training provided to teacher interns. The findings indicate that participants generally valued the academic and pedagogical knowledge acquired at their institutions. However, a recurrent concern was that theoretical preparation was stronger than practical preparation.

A teacher intern described the situation as follows:

We learn many teaching methods in class, and the lecturers explain them well. The difficulty is applying those methods when you are standing in front of a large class with different types of learners." (INT-TI10 June, 2026)

A lecturer expressed a similar concern:

Students can explain teaching methods during examinations, but professional competence develops when they repeatedly practice those methods, receive feedback and reflect on what happened in the classroom." (INT-L7, June, 2026)

The finding indicates a gap between knowing about teaching and being able to teach effectively. This distinction is central to teacher education scholarship. Darling-Hammond (2000) argues that effective teacher preparation requires more than formal academic qualifications; preparation needs to develop the knowledge and capacities that teachers actually use in classrooms. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) found that teacher preparation was strongly associated with teacher effectiveness, with certified teachers in their study producing stronger student achievement gains than comparable uncertified teachers. This evidence supports the argument that professional preparation is not an optional addition to teacher development but an important foundation of effective teaching. The finding also corresponds with Darling-Hammond's (2000) broader argument that well-integrated teacher-education programmes combine coursework with meaningful clinical preparation. Her work emphasizes that stronger preparation is associated with greater teacher confidence and effectiveness and that teacher education is more powerful when coursework and extended practical preparation are closely connected. The Tanzanian context makes this issue particularly significant. Nzilano's study of Tanzanian pre-service teachers examined their preparation for classroom teaching and their competencies during practice teaching, including classroom-management issues. The relevance to the current study is clear: teacher interns need opportunities to develop competence under actual school conditions rather than relying exclusively on university-based theoretical instruction.

Recent Tanzanian scholarship provides even stronger support. Mgaiwa and Milinga's review identifies

weaknesses in university–school partnerships and inadequate connections between theory and practicum in Tanzanian teacher education. They argue that meaningful collaboration between teacher-training institutions and schools is necessary to reduce the theory–practice gap and recommend timely and extended teaching–practice opportunities. This evidence helps explain the concerns raised by participants in the present study. If teacher interns receive strong theoretical instruction but have insufficient opportunities to practice, the transition into secondary-school teaching may remain difficult. The issue becomes more serious in the context of the 2028 double cohort. A teacher who is adequately prepared for an ordinary classroom may still struggle when confronted with substantially larger classes, limited instructional materials and diverse learner needs. Therefore, professional preparation for the anticipated transition needs to address not only general teaching competence but also capacity to teach effectively under conditions of increased demand.

4.3 Teaching Practice, Mentorship and Supervision

A third theme emerging from the data concerned teaching practice, mentorship and supervision. Participants considered teaching practice essential but expressed concern about the consistency and quality of support received during the practicum.

One participant stated:

Teaching practice is where you really learn how to teach. But sometimes the mentor is busy, so you may teach several lessons without receiving detailed feedback about what you did well or what you should change. (INT-TI14, June 2026)

Another participant observed:

“The experience depends a lot on the school and the mentor. When the mentor observes you and discusses the lesson afterwards, you improve quickly.” (FGD-TI5, June 2026)

These accounts suggest that teaching practice should not be treated merely as a placement requirement. It is a major component of professional learning. The value of practicum depends partly on the quality of observation, feedback, modelling and reflection available to the teacher intern. This finding is strongly supported by recent Tanzanian research. Kyaruzi’s study of 584 teacher trainees found that trainees experienced limitations in pedagogical support, modelling, feedback and autonomy to practice teaching. This is particularly relevant because the current study similarly identifies practical support as a major area requiring strengthening. Mpate’s recent qualitative study in Tanzania also found challenges involving communication, understanding of effective mentoring practices, selection of mentors, mentors’ willingness to engage in mentoring, and differences between the expectations of mentors and student teachers. The study used interviews and focus group discussions, making its methodological and contextual relevance to the present research especially strong. The implication is that improving internship arrangements requires more than increasing the number of schools accepting teacher interns. Mentor teachers themselves need preparation concerning their mentoring responsibilities. They need to know how to observe lessons, provide constructive feedback, model effective teaching, and encourage interns to reflect on their practice. The problem can again be interpreted through General Systems Theory. Teaching practice links the higher learning institution with the secondary school. If communication between these two parts is weak, the teacher-preparation system becomes fragmented. The university may emphasize particular pedagogical approaches while the school operates according to different expectations. The teacher intern then becomes the person responsible for reconciling the two systems. Mgaiwa and Milinga (2024) similarly identify unhealthy university–school partnerships and weak theory–practicum connections as important concerns in Tanzanian teacher education. The convergence between that literature and the present participant accounts strengthens the argument that university–school collaboration should be treated as a central component of institutional preparedness rather than as an administrative arrangement.

4.4 Preparation for Large and Diverse Classrooms

Participants repeatedly connected institutional readiness with teacher interns' ability to manage larger and more diverse classrooms. One of the respondent interns displayed that:

The concern is not only having more students. You also have students who learn differently. A teacher must know how to organize the class, assess students, and give attention to those who need more help. (INT-TI17 2 June 2026)

Another respondent commented that:

If the number of students increases, classroom management will become a major issue. We need more practical preparation and teaching and learning material before we graduate. We need to be in the real field to teach, not only having theory. (INT-TI1, 2 June 2026)

The focus-group discussions produced comparable concerns:

The double cohort will require teachers to manage many learners at the same time. We need to practice strategies for large classes instead of preparing only for normal classroom situations. Otherwise, the intention of the government to meet the goal number four will not be realized. (FGD-TI8, 2 June 2026)

These findings suggest that participants understood preparedness as more than simply possessing a teaching qualification. They associated readiness with the ability to perform effectively under challenging classroom conditions. This view is consistent with the broader teacher-quality literature. Darling-Hammond (2000) emphasizes that teacher qualifications and preparation matter because they influence the capacities teachers bring into classrooms. Teacher preparation therefore needs to equip prospective teachers with adaptable professional knowledge rather than a collection of theoretical concepts. The issue is particularly important for classroom management. A teacher working with a large number of learners must organize participation, maintain attention, monitor understanding, assess learning, and respond to behavioral issues. These competencies are difficult to develop through lectures alone. Consequently, the present findings suggest that higher learning institutions should incorporate more realistic teaching simulations, microteaching, extended school-based practice, peer observation and structured reflection into teacher preparation. These activities would allow interns to encounter common classroom problems before assuming full professional responsibility.

4.5 Teacher Interns' Perceptions of Institutional Readiness

The third objective examined teacher interns' perceptions of the readiness of higher learning institutions to support them for the 2028 double cohort. The overall finding was that participants perceived their institutions as partially prepared rather than fully prepared.

One participant summarized the position as follows:

The institution has started preparing us, but I cannot say we are completely ready. We need more practical experience and stronger preparation for large classes." (INT-TI17, 12 June 2026)

Another participant claimed that:

I feel prepared to teach my subject, but I am less confident about handling a very large class, with students having diverse understanding, some standard six while some standard seven. At the same time, where resources are limited." (INT-TI2 13 June 2026)

These accounts are analytically important because they distinguish between academic confidence and professional readiness. Teacher interns may feel competent in their subject areas while remaining uncertain about

classroom management, assessment, ICT integration, inclusive teaching and working under resource constraints. This finding is consistent with the literature showing that teacher preparation is most effective when academic coursework is integrated with clinical and practical experience. Darling-Hammond's research indicates that stronger preparation is associated with teacher confidence and effectiveness, particularly where programmes integrate coursework with extended practical preparation. The Tanzanian evidence concerning mentorship further reinforces this interpretation. Kyaruzi (2025/2026) found that teacher trainees could perceive some dimensions of mentor support positively while simultaneously reporting limitations in modelling, feedback, ICT integration and autonomy to practice. Thus, a generally positive perception of teacher preparation should not be interpreted as evidence that all components of the system are functioning adequately. Teacher interns' perceptions therefore constitute important feedback within the systems model. They provide information about the difference between what the institution intends to provide and what students actually experience.

4.6 University–School Partnership as a Condition of Preparedness

Another important finding was the need for stronger collaboration between higher learning institutions and secondary schools.

One of the lecturers voiced that:

The university and schools need to work more closely, as a team tackling the same goal. The university may have one expectation, while the school has another. The student m teacher is the one who experiences the difference. (INT-L9 13 June 2026)

This concern is supported strongly by Tanzanian literature. Mgaiwa and Milinga (2024) argue that teacher education in Tanzania is affected by weak university–school partnerships and insufficient theory–practicum connections. They recommend stronger collaboration and shared responsibility between universities and schools. For the 2028 double cohort, this partnership becomes particularly important. Higher learning institutions need information about the actual conditions teacher interns will encounter in secondary schools. Schools, in turn, need to understand the competencies expected from interns and participate actively in their professional development.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the preparedness of higher learning institutions in supporting qualified teacher interns for the implementation of the anticipated 2028 double cohort in secondary schools in Mwanza Region. The study focused on three dimensions: the availability of teaching and learning resources, the adequacy of professional training, and teacher interns' perceptions of institutional readiness. The findings indicate that higher learning institutions have established important foundations for teacher preparation, but their existing capacity requires further strengthening. Participants acknowledged the availability of basic classrooms, libraries, textbooks and ICT facilities, but concerns were raised regarding their adequacy, accessibility and effective use. This distinction is important because the presence of resources does not necessarily mean that teacher interns have sufficient opportunities to use them. Effective teacher preparation requires learning environments in which prospective teachers can develop both theoretical understanding and practical pedagogical competence. The study further found that professional training provides teacher interns with useful theoretical and pedagogical knowledge, but the relationship between university-based coursework and practical classroom experience requires strengthening. Teacher interns particularly identified classroom management, teaching large classes, ICT integration, and assessment and responding to learner diversity as areas requiring additional practical preparation. Mentorship and supervision emerged as another significant component of institutional preparedness. The quality of the teaching–practice experience was closely related to the availability of constructive feedback, effective communication and committed mentors. Moreover, teacher interns perceived their institutions as partially prepared rather than fully prepared for the anticipated demands associated with the 2028 double cohort. The significance of this finding extends beyond the production of additional teacher graduates. Institutional preparedness should instead be

understood as the capacity of the teacher-preparation system to produce teachers who possess adequate subject knowledge, pedagogical competence, practical experience, classroom-management skills and professional confidence. The study therefore concludes that preparation for the 2028 double cohort should be treated as a system-level teacher-education priority. Strengthening teacher preparation before enrolment pressure increases is likely to be more effective than attempting to address shortages and weaknesses after schools have already begun experiencing the consequences of increased student numbers.

Recommendations - Based on the findings, the study proposes the following recommendations. First, higher learning institutions should conduct systematic capacity assessments. These assessments should examine classrooms, libraries, laboratories, ICT facilities, teaching materials, lecturer availability and teaching-practice capacity. Such assessments should be linked to projected teacher demand rather than current student numbers. This would enable institutions to identify resource gaps before the 2028 transition creates additional pressure. Second, teacher-education programmes should become more practice-oriented. Institutions should increase opportunities for microteaching, classroom simulations, supervised teaching practice, peer observation and reflective learning. Practical preparation should specifically address large-class teaching, classroom management, inclusive education, formative assessment and ICT-supported instruction. The objective should not simply be to increase the duration of teaching practice but to improve its educational quality.

Third, university-school partnerships should be strengthened. Higher learning institutions and secondary schools should jointly plan teaching practice and establish clear responsibilities for lecturers, school supervisors and mentor teachers. Regular communication should be established so that information about teacher interns' strengths and weaknesses can be used to improve university-based preparation. Fourth, mentor teachers should receive preparation for mentoring. Being an experienced classroom teacher does not automatically mean that an individual is an effective mentor. Mentor preparation should include lesson observation, professional modelling, constructive feedback, reflective dialogue and strategies for supporting teacher interns. Fifth, teacher interns should be specifically prepared for large and diverse classrooms. Professional training should include practical strategies for organizing large classes, differentiating instruction, managing learner behaviour, using cooperative learning, conducting formative assessment and supporting learners with different educational needs. This is particularly important because increased enrolment can increase the complexity of teaching even where teacher numbers also increase.

Sixth, ICT investment should combine infrastructure with pedagogical preparation. Purchasing computers and other digital equipment is insufficient if teacher interns do not have repeated opportunities to use technology for lesson preparation, classroom instruction, assessment and professional communication. ICT infrastructure should therefore be accompanied by lecturer training, technical support and practical opportunities for teacher interns. Finally, education policymakers should establish coordinated planning mechanisms. The Ministry responsible for education, higher learning institutions, teacher educators, secondary schools and other relevant stakeholders should coordinate planning for the 2028 double cohort. Teacher supply should be considered alongside teacher quality, institutional capacity, infrastructure, teaching materials and professional support.

Limitations and Areas for Further Research - The study is limited by its qualitative case study design and its focus on selected higher learning institutions in Mwanza Region. Consequently, the findings should not be interpreted as statistically representative of all higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Rather, they provide contextual and experiential evidence concerning institutional preparedness. A further limitation is that institutional preparedness is a dynamic phenomenon. Resources, teacher-training policies, enrolment projections and government interventions may change before 2028. The findings should therefore be understood as evidence of preparedness within the period in which the study is conducted. Future research should examine preparedness across several regions of Tanzania to determine whether similar challenges exist in different institutional and geographical contexts. Comparative research involving public and private higher learning institutions could also reveal differences in resources, teacher preparation and practicum arrangements.

Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable. Teacher interns could be followed from their final year of teacher preparation into their first years of professional teaching. Such research could determine whether competencies developed during teacher education translate into effective classroom practice when teachers encounter real-world pressures. Further research should also investigate the scale and educational consequences of the anticipated 2028 double cohort using reliable administrative and demographic data. Such research should examine teacher demand, classroom capacity, instructional materials, teacher deployment and regional variations. This would enable teacher-education institutions and policymakers to base planning on empirical projections rather than assumptions.

Practical Educational Implications - The findings have significant implications for educational practice because the preparedness of higher learning institutions ultimately affects what happens inside secondary-school classrooms.

For teachers and teacher interns, the findings demonstrate the need to develop professional competence beyond subject-matter knowledge. Teachers entering the profession during a period of increased enrolment may need to teach larger classes, manage limited resources and respond to learners with different academic and social needs. Teacher preparation should therefore give interns repeated opportunities to practise classroom management, assessment, differentiated instruction and ICT-supported teaching.

For students, the implications are equally important. Learners are the ultimate beneficiaries of an effective teacher-preparation system. If teachers are inadequately prepared for large and diverse classrooms, students may receive less individual attention and less timely feedback. They may also experience reduced access to instructional resources.

For secondary schools, the findings emphasize the need to become active partners in teacher preparation. Schools should establish clear mentoring arrangements and ensure that teacher interns receive regular observation and feedback. The school should function not merely as the location of teaching practice but as a professional learning environment.

For higher learning institutions, the findings point to the need to strengthen institutional capacity and practical teacher preparation. Institutions should examine whether their existing resources are adequate for current enrolment and whether they could support additional numbers of teacher interns. They should also strengthen the relationship between university coursework and school-based practice.

For education policymakers, the findings demonstrate that the 2028 double cohort should be addressed through coordinated system planning. Recruitment of additional teachers is important, but recruitment alone cannot guarantee educational quality. Teacher preparation, infrastructure, teaching materials, mentoring, and teacher deployment need to be planned together.

The broader practical implication is therefore that educational expansion and educational quality should be treated as interconnected objectives. Expanding access to secondary education without strengthening the human and institutional capacity required to support that expansion may create additional pressure on the education system.

6. References

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