

The Role of Teaching Practice in Teacher Education Programme in Tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State

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Abstract: *This study examined the role of teaching practice in teacher education programme in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study examined the attitude of undergraduate towards teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, evaluated the students' teacher/host teachers' relationship in the field and assessed the impact of teaching practice exercise on the students' disposition to teaching. This study employed descriptive research of survey design. A sample of 180 respondents comprises 150 student teachers and 30 secondary school teachers were selected through simple random sampling technique for the study. The instrument used in collecting data for this study was a self-constructed questionnaire that contained 30 items. The instrument was validated by given it to experts in Tests and Measurement and psychologist to ensure both the face and content validity of the instrument. The reliability of the instruments was established using test re-test method of reliability and a coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage and mean and standard deviation. Results of the findings of the study showed that undergraduate in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State have positive attitude towards teaching practice. The finding also revealed that there is a difference between student teachers and hosts teachers' activities during teaching practice exercise. The finding further revealed that teaching practice exercise have impact on students; disposition to teaching as it helps them to develop self-confidence, making them more creative, admit mistakes and offers free time for them. It was concluded in this study that there was an impact of teaching practice exercise on the students' disposition to teaching. Student teachers' attitude and willingness was one of the main factors that determine the successful implementation of the program. Based on the finding of this study, it was recommended that; Students should be encouraged to maintain positive attitude towards teaching practice. Student teachers should be motivated during their teaching practice exercise by giving prizes to overall best performer in each of the host school. Self-confidence and creativity should be part of what the supervisors should look for during the assessment of the student teachers*

Keywords: teaching practice, teacher education, tertiary institution, teaching profession

INTRODUCTION

Practice teaching is an important component towards becoming a teacher. It provides experiences to student teachers in the actual teaching and learning environment. During teaching practice, a student-teacher is given the opportunity to try the art of teaching before actually getting into the real world of the teaching profession. Student-teachers also know the value of teaching practice and they perceive it as the important aspect of their preparation for the teaching profession since it provides for the real interface between student hood and membership of the profession (Rakesh, 2013). Teachers in a society according to William (2016) are thought to be agents of change as they are central to the delivery of quality education. Quality teachers are the greatest determinant of students' achievement and their impact are greater than any other social factors, including class size, parent education, and income and language background. Teachers play an important role in shaping the future of individuals as well as of entire generations. They can also influence the economic dynamism of the country by imparting skills that translate into innovation and productivity in the workplace (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004). Because of the current changing and challenging world, teachers should be provided with a range of skills, knowledge, attitudes and relevant educational experience that enable them to cope up with the challenge. Education is expected to play several key roles in an effort of developing country socio-economic and cultural status. However, it is impossible to think of quality education without having academically qualified and professionally responsible teachers in the schools. Thus, for teachers to play their role effectively in schools there must be a well-designed and successfully implemented teaching practice program for student teachers that aims at producing teachers who are academically qualified, professionally skilled, and attitudinally and ethically committed to their profession. The teacher's character and quality competence are the most significant factors which influence the education quality and its contribution to national development (Kumar & Ratnalikar, 2005). Given and ideal syllabus and sufficient time for teaching, a teacher will not successful achieve unless he/she is enthusiastic about the work, knows the subject and how to teach, keen, well informed, loves the subject and believes in its values in spite of difficulties and hand carps (Kumar & Ratnalikar, 2005).

Teaching Practice (TP) program in Nigeria teachers colleges and universities takes place national wide in implementing teacher education curriculum but with some challenges such as lack of resources, funds and inappropriate teaching practice coordination. The undergraduate student teachers are expected to attend teaching practice in secondary schools and the government should improve the classroom settings and reasonable. This means that if classroom learning is to be effective, teachers must well be trained and should be ready to assume their professional responsibility. The teachers training program according to Bell (2004) aimed at developing better teaching skills among student teachers. Student teachers in field-based programs have the opportunity to use their teaching practice experiences to regularly apply pedagogical theory and course learning to assist them to develop as a skilful, knowledgeable and reflective teacher. The provision of education has undergone several changes that aim at improving its quality. One

obvious move is the improvement of the teaching process to reflect new needs of society. In our context this involved improving teacher training and introduction of competence-based education approaches (Mkonongwa, 2012). It has been observed from experience that teaching sector (secondary teacher education) does not attract academically able and professionally motivated students towards teaching carrier. The government has been encouraging many universities to offer teacher training programs which its implementation seems to work properly. However, the problem of teaching practice for undergraduate students' teachers has not been studied.

Good teaching practice is a key influence on students' learning - a desired outcome and primary goal of higher educational institutions. Teachers strive to meet the principles of good practice in an effort to provide the best learning experience for their students. Student Teaching is the most important experience in teacher education programme and is generally based on a country's National Education policy. Teaching practice is a compulsory course for all aspiring student teachers registered in a teacher preparation programme in Nigeria institutions. It is supposed to be a one-semester in duration; usually lasting from the beginning to the end of the First Semester of the final year of students' training. During this period, most programmers focus on: Instructional planning, Instructional technology, Micro-teaching mentoring (Model Teaching, Assessment, Feedback Reports etc.), Studies in teaching method and Posting of students to schools where they can practice their major courses of study.

The Student Teaching Program at any higher institution is a well-structured programme designed to provide an opportunity to develop and evaluate aspiring teachers' competence in an actual classroom within school settings. In a paper on Global exposure presented at the Research Seminar Series, Aglazor (2011) noted that field-based experiences such as study abroad and student teaching are intended to bridge theory and practice. The teaching practice exercise is the culminating point where the relationship among the three major players: university supervisor, host teacher, and aspiring teacher interface to determine the quality of experience the aspiring teaching will take away. It becomes the bedrock on which the aspiring teacher once certified and employed builds their professional identity. It is therefore, necessary that aspiring teachers are paired with competent, knowledgeable and concerned university supervisors to help them assume the full range of duties of a teacher during this hands-on training.

Host teachers have equally vital influence in aspiring teachers' professional growth and development. A College of Education or University Faculty of Education Teacher Education Programme is informed by its institution's unique vision and mission. For validity, education programmers' must be guided by their institution's vision and philosophical theories. This underscores the reason why programmers must make sure their student teachers understand both the institution and programme's educational philosophy.

A course description is a brief statement designed and intended to inform students about the subject matter, content, breadth and practical applicability of the course. It is also used to inform for student enroll and transfer. Students like to know what they are going to learn in a course before

they enroll in a course. Also, if a student is transfers to another institution, the course description helps them identify transferable and equivalent courses to the new school. Additionally, it is used for institutional accreditation as proof of content covered in the different subject areas. In the tradition of best practice, all courses are expected to have course descriptions; so does Teaching Practice. It is important that the faculty of education design a course description for the teaching practice programme. The teaching Practice course (EDU 204 & 304 as the case may be in some tertiary institutions) is based on National Universities Commission and the National Policy on Education mandate for Basic primary and secondary education programmes. The Student Teaching Programme is designed to develop and evaluate student teachers' competence in actual classroom and school settings. The programme is intended to bridge theory and practice by providing opportunity for hands-on learning for Student Teachers. Consequently, participants are given the opportunity to demonstrate clear understanding of best practice in different teaching methods to meet students' learning needs and classroom management skills.

Relying on the partnership of competent, knowledgeable and caring cooperating teachers and host schools, Student Teachers assume the full range of duties of a teacher in real classrooms. Based on meaningful mentoring and collaboration among University Supervisors, Cooperating Teachers and the Student Teachers at the end of this field experience participants would demonstrate clear understanding of best practice in students' developmental levels, different teaching methods to meet students' learning needs and classroom management skills. According to National Universities Commission (NUC, 2007) Benchmark and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2015), the following sets of objectives have been established for why teaching practice is a mandatory component of teacher training.

- i. To expose student-teachers to real life classroom experiences under the supervision of professional teachers.
- ii. To provide the forum for student-teacher to translate educational theories and principles into practice.
- iii. To enable student-teachers discover their own strengths and weaknesses in classroom teaching and provide opportunities to enable them address their weaknesses and enrich their strengths.
- iv. To familiarize student-teachers with real school environment as their future work place.
- v. To provide student-teachers with an opportunity for further acquisition of professional skills, competencies, personal characteristics and experience for full-time teaching after graduation.
- vi. To help student-teachers develop a positive attitude towards the teaching profession.
- vii. To serve as a means of assessing the quality of training being provided by teacher training institutions.

Teaching is a basic social human activity which involves two or more people often called the teacher and the learner, this implies that interaction or sets of interaction between two or more people is involved. That is, teaching cannot be done in isolation except there is a kind of interaction which must bring about learning, (Omotayo, Ajayi, Fatoba, & Ogundola, 2009).

Another aspect of the teaching practice that is very germane is the teaching practice Committee. This is a vital tool to programme managers. Depending on the size of the school, the teaching practice committee serves as an advisory board for decisions and changes that lead to programme improvement. Membership of the teaching practice committee can be by appointment or selected. One objective way to go about it is to have a faculty member from every department in the Faculty of Education and other departments whose students participate in teaching practice field experience. So the teaching practice committee should be a balanced representation of the faculty of education. The different roles that can be assigned to committee members include, but not limited to: Coordinator of T P/Chair of T P Committee, Secretary, Members, Social Secretary. Duties of committee members include searching for and securing schools for teaching practice, field supervision and first line respondents in times of crisis at host schools. It is suggested that committee members' contact information be made available to students on teaching practice should they need advice and support at any point during their field experience.

Success of teaching practice depends on the collaboration among cooperating teacher, university supervisor and aspiring teacher. The primary goal of this team is to guide the aspiring teacher to successful completion of teaching practice. It is important for the team to have a clear understanding of the programme expectations for teaching practice participants. To function as a team, communication and positive interaction are necessary ingredients needed for clarity of purpose and for collaboratively guiding, mentoring and supporting student teachers. The Aspiring Teacher's field experience is the culminating activity for teacher candidates. Efforts should be made by programme managers to place aspiring teachers at schools and subjects that corresponds with their intended teaching license. Cooperating Teachers are integral to successful professional teacher training or teacher education programme. They are field mentors due to their experience in the classrooms. They are expected to guide student teachers during their teaching practice in areas of instructional design, classroom management, Cooperating Teacher University Supervisor Teaching Practice Aspiring Teacher.

Marais and Meir (2004) observed that despite the fact that university lecturers value teaching practice as the bridge between theory and practice, student teachers sometimes found it difficult to relate course content to everyday classroom practice. The framework for teacher education proposes the preparation process of teachers be done in such a way that it reflects the paradigm shift from the content-based to competency-based approach in teaching and learning (TIE, 2009). Schultz (2005) provides support for the concept of day-to-day problem solving capacity development through practicum learning. The study highlighted the need for teacher preparation to support new teacher inquiry to help teacher candidates use problem solving approaches when they face the day-to-day challenges in a classroom. A study by Brouwer & Korthagen (2005) confirmed the role of the practicum in the overall development of competent teachers. While both classroom theory and practicum experiences were found to be contributors to a new teacher's development, the practicum in a school context was more influential than the course components of the teacher education program on the development of teaching competence. However, the nature of the practicum has also been found to matter when teacher competencies are the desired outcome.

In a study by Beck, Kosnik, and Rowsell (2007), researchers identified the need for more focus in the practicum on practical issues related to the daily tasks of functioning in a classroom. In this study, teacher candidates identified six characteristics or skills needed to be provided and developed in their preparation programs to prepare them to teach, including: theoretical understanding, practical knowledge and skills, comprehensive program planning ability, knowledge of what must be done in the first few weeks of school, understanding and skill in assessment and evaluation, and knowledge of how to implement effective group work. It is interesting to note that five of these six characteristics relate to implementation practices that might be expected to develop in teacher candidates during their practicum placements.

The objective of sending students to the university is to assist them to learn some basic skills, beliefs and knowledge, necessary for their personal and societal development. The lecturers' role is mainly to assist and guide the students to achieve their objectives. Despite the increase in the number and quality of lecturers in Nigerian universities (through training and retraining/workshops/seminars), it appears that education students still see themselves as inferior to students of other faculties.

It also appears that majority of the teachers in both primary and secondary schools of nowadays chooses teaching as a profession due to the perceived favorable financial remuneration without having keen interest in the profession.

Skill could be viewed as part of the psychological well-being of the teacher which could have tremendous effects on their teaching job. Variables like mood, comportment, attitude and interest could imping on personal study of the teacher and subsequent transmission of such knowledge to the student in such a way that the students will be able to have good understanding of whatever instruction is been pass across to them. The consequence of this could be that the students are half baked in such knowledge or totally ignorant of such knowledge.

The problem of some teachers, most probably those who are not from educational background could be that they lack some psychological principles of human behavior and pedagogy of teaching, which could have helped in inculcating positive disposition about teaching. It is expected that this training ought to have taken place during teaching practice exercise. Hence, this study sought to examine the role of teaching practice in teacher education programme in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the role of teaching practice in teacher education programme in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study examined the attitude of undergraduate towards teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, evaluated the students' teacher/host teachers' relationship in the field and assessed the impact of teaching practice exercise on the students' disposition to teaching.

Research Question

The following research questions were raised

1. What is the attitude of undergraduate towards teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?
2. Is there any relationship between students' teacher and hosts teachers' activities during teaching practice exercise?
3. What is the impact of teaching practice exercise on the students' disposition to teaching?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive research design of the survey type. The study was on the role of teaching practice in teacher education programme in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The population for the study consisted of 6,167 university undergraduates in Ekiti State, as obtained from the universities establishment and management of Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Federal University of Oye, Oye Ekiti and Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti and some selected teachers in some of the secondary schools in Ado Ekiti. A total of 180 participants comprises 150 university undergraduates and 30 secondary school teachers were selected through simple random sampling technique as sample for the study. The research instrument used in collecting data for this study was a self-constructed questionnaire that contained 30 items that reflects issues that bothers on teaching as a profession. The respondents were asked to indicate how the concept appears to them by making a mark (✓) on the appropriate point of the scale on a 4-point continuum: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The face and content validity of the instrument was ensured. Copies of the instrument were given to experts in Tests and Measurement and Educational psychologist to ensure both the face and content validity. To ensure the reliability of the instrument; the instrument were administered on 30 respondents who were not among the sample for the study and a reliability coefficient of 0.76 of the instrument was ascertained using test re-test reliability method.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of undergraduate towards teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of the attitude of undergraduate towards teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State

S/N	Statement	Agree		Disagree	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1	I give special attention to students from different cultures during my teaching practice	101	67.33	49	32.67
2	I give due opportunities to the students for proper motivation during my teaching practice	113	75.33	37	24.67
3	I always appreciate student's opinions and demands in the class during my teaching practice	115	76.67	35	23.33
4	I enjoy teaching because it gives students the freedom to think	96	64.0	54	36.0
5	People never look down on good teachers	40	26.67	110	73.33
6	I like teaching in the morning	120	80.0	30	20.0

Table 1 shows the attitude of undergraduate towards teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. 120 (80.0%) of the students said that they like teaching in the morning while 115 (76.67%) of them said that they always appreciate student's opinions and demands in the class during my teaching practice. I give due opportunities to the students for proper motivation during my teaching practice exercise, this was the response of 113 (75.33%) of the students while 101 (67.33%) of them said that they give special attention to students from different cultures during my teaching practice. About 96 (64.0%) of the students said that they enjoyed teaching because it gives students the freedom to think. From the table above, it could be said that undergraduate in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State have positive attitude towards teaching practice.

Research Question 2: Is there any difference between students' teacher and hosts teachers' activities during teaching practice exercise?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the difference between students' teacher and hosts teachers' activities during teaching practice exercise

Variables	N	Mean	S.D
Students teacher	150	25.30	11.26
Host teacher	30	16.84	7.16

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the difference between student teachers and hosts teachers' activities during teaching practice exercise to be 25.30; 11.26 and 16.84; 7.16 for student teachers and host teachers' activities respectively. The mean is apparently higher for students' teachers than the host teachers, this implies that there is difference between student teachers and hosts teachers' activities during teaching practice exercise in favour of the students teachers. This could be evidenced in the fact that they were under monitoring and evaluation and they believe that their score matters in the course of the exercise.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of teaching practice exercise on the students' disposition to teaching?

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of the impact of teaching practice exercise on the students' disposition to teaching

S/N	Statement	Agree		Disagree	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1	Teaching profession offers free time for me.	126	84.0	24	16.0
2	Teaching is a respectable profession.	33	22.0	117	78.0
3	I admit my mistakes, if pointed out by students willingly	135	90.0	15	10.0
4	I have enough self confidence	143	95.33	7	4.67
5	I have complete knowledge of individual differences	122	81.33	28	18.67
6	Classroom teaching makes the teacher more creative.	139	92.67	11	7.33

Table 3 shows the impact of teaching practice exercise on the students' disposition to teaching. 143 (95.33%) of the student teachers said that they now have enough self-confidence while 139 (92.67%) of them said that Classroom teaching makes the teacher more creative. 135 (90.0%) of the students' teachers said that they admit their mistakes, if pointed out by students willingly while 126 (84.0%) of them said that teaching profession offers free time for them. About 122 (81.33%) of the respondents said that they have complete knowledge of individual differences after the teaching practice exercise. From the table above, it could be pointed out that teaching practice exercise have impact on students; disposition to teaching as it helps them to develop self-confidence, making them more creative, admit mistakes and offers free time for them.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that undergraduate in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State have positive attitude towards teaching practice. This finding is in agreement to the submission of Goldhaber and Anthony (2004) who submitted that teaching can influence the economic dynamism of the country by imparting skills that translate into innovation and productivity in the workplace and due to the current changing and challenging world, teachers should be provided with a range of skills, knowledge, attitudes and relevant educational experience that enable them to cope up with the challenge.

The finding also revealed that there is a difference between student teachers and hosts teachers' activities during teaching practice exercise. This finding agrees with the submission of Aglazor (2017), who stated that relying on the partnership of competent, knowledgeable and caring cooperating teachers and host schools' teachers, Student Teachers assume the full range of duties of a teacher in real classrooms.

The finding further revealed that teaching practice exercise have impact on students; disposition to teaching as it helps them to develop self-confidence, making them more creative, admit mistakes

and offers free time for them. This finding supports the finding Omotayo, Ajayi, Fatoba, and Ogundola, (2009) who found out that teaching is a basic social human activity which involves two or more people often called the teacher and the learner, this implies that interaction or sets of interaction between two or more people is involved. That is, teaching cannot be done in isolation except there is a kind of interactions which must bring about learning,

CONCLUSION

This study specifically showed that there was an impact of teaching practice exercise on the students' disposition to teaching. Student teachers' attitude and willingness was one of the main factors that determine the successful implementation of the program.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, it was therefore recommended that:

1. Students should be encouraged to maintain positive attitude towards teaching practice
2. Student teachers should be motivated during their teaching practice exercise by giving prizes to overall best performer in each of the host school.
3. Self-confidence and creativity should be part of what the supervisors should look for during the assessment of the student teachers

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