THE PLACE OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Teaching Practice (TP) is fundamental and an age long practice in the faculties of education. However, as old as it is and with the new trend in teaching, there are serious challenges affecting the effectiveness of TP exercise. Notably, they lack good proficiency, subject mastery after graduation among others. This study examined the place of TP in Nigerian universities (NU). Descriptive survey research design was adopted. Study population comprised 734 students while purposive sampling technique was used in selecting six departments in the Faculty of Education (FU), University of Ibadan (UI), Ibadan Nigeria. Proportionate size to sampling technique was used to select 70% of 400 (320) level students in each department selected for the survey. "Teaching Practice Questionnaire for Students (TPQS)" was the research instrument used to collect data. Cronbach's Alpha statistics was used to obtain the reliability coefficient of 0.89. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation were used in analyzing the data collected. Level of effectiveness of TP exercise was reported to be high. The result also showed that TP exercise had positive effect on student teachers. The result equally found that no significant but positive and weak relationship exists between TP of student teachers and the acquisition of 21st century skills in the FU, UI. Stakeholders should work together to keep upon improving effectiveness of TP exercise in NU. The acquisition of 21st century skills should be taught student teachers from time to time for effective teaching delivery.

Keyword: Teaching Practice Exercise, Student Teacher, Teaching Effectiveness

Introduction

There is no doubt that education is an inevitable tool for sustainable development and a means for advancing the frontier of knowledge. In this manner, education is severally conceived and inculcated by people of varying ages, cultures, tribes and ages for sustainable development. The potency of education is more evident in its globalization trends imbued with instrumental values of nurturing productive citizens for sustainable development and democracy. For more than century, education has been recognized as a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes to the learners. The effectiveness of any educational system depends greatly on the educational attainment of teachers because no system of education can be qualitatively higher than the quality and commitment of its teachers.

The business of teaching is the major preoccupation of teachers in the school system in Nigeria. For teachers to be highly effective in the classroom and their area of specialization, they must have gone through adequate, relevant and appropriate training before joining teaching profession. This specialized training separates a trained teacher from a quack in the school system (Awoderu, 2007). However, the usefulness of adequate preparation is highly written in the National Policy on Education. The policy states that teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Teaching practice is of great importance in teacher education programme. It is a component of training leading to the award of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), Bachelor degree in Education (B. Sc. (Ed) or B.Ed.) and Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) in Nigeria.

Teachers are the heart and soul of the educational enterprises, indeed, the life of the school system and Nigerians largely depend on them. These teachers are expected to be properly groomed in theories and practices for effective teaching in the classroom and excellent lesson note prepared. Hence, they must have been in the field to translate these theories into practices and to see the challenges facing the teaching profession.

The term teaching practice has three major connotations: the practising of teaching skills and acquisition of the role of a teacher; the whole range of experiences that students go through in schools; and the practical aspects of the course as distinct from theoretical (Gujjar, Naoreen, Saifi and Bajwa, 2010). Teaching practice according to National Commission for Colleges of Education- NCCE (2015) has the following four features: first is a vocational course, which is competency and performance based. It is also a form of internship for professional teachers, a statutory and mandatory professional requirement for entering into the teaching profession. The second is a skill development exercise, it is a kind of clinical therapy, designed to diagnose and remediate professional teachers' competence deficiencies. The third is designed as a feedback channel to generate information on the effectiveness or otherwise of a Teacher Education Programme. The fourth is data gathering on student teachers' practicum assessment that based on a set of effective teaching indicators.

A meaningful teaching practice is expected to include microteaching and field teaching experiences (Amuda, 2017). This kind of experiences will help the teaching practice students to acquire knowledge and skill in coping with classroom situation after their graduation. As part of the package, teaching practice is allocated specific period of time during which student teachers are sometime posted to schools to teach and demonstrate in practical terms

the knowledge and skills they had acquired during the third or fourth years of training while some universities usually require their students to choose the school of their choice.

These student teachers are required to submit their chosen schools with the address of the schools and time table to teaching practice coordinator for supervision. As soon as they are reported to teaching practice coordinator, they are expected to go back to their posted or chosen schools and teach based on their areas of specialization. Student teachers are expected to stay in their practice schools from official opening time to closing time within the six weeks. Although, Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria usually do their teaching practice in 12 or 13 weeks but the system has now substituted to a complete term that is in the first semester of the 300 level of NCE programme (Amuda, 2017). Teaching practice is a compulsory course for all aspiring teachers registered in a teacher preparation programme in Nigeria. Teaching practice exercise is like housemanship in Medicine and Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) for engineers and Court Attachment for Lawyers (Nnenna and Olanrewaju, 2015).

However, there are serious challenges affecting the effectiveness of teaching practice exercise. Notably, they lack good proficiency and subject mastery after graduation. Idowu (2000) observed that some of the problems identified include psychological makeup of the trainees, pedagogical preparations, classroom adaptation, and mode and means of assessment. Jekayinfa (2012) has also identified weaknesses or flaws in the organization, implementation and evaluation of teaching practice exercise in Nigerian Teacher Education Institutions. Some of the flaws identified by this researcher include lack of mentoring, practical teaching orientation and induction by cooperating teachers, lack of team work, poor supervision, subjective grading and poor feedback. This implies that teaching practice as being currently run in the higher institutions of learning is considered as poor.

Ekundayo, Alonge, Kolawole and Ekundayo (2014) submitted that there are a lot of obstacles facing the aspiring teachers in the course of carrying out their official exercise and this seems to affect the effectiveness of the student teachers. The researchers added that those obstacles can be categorized into three, namely: practising school related problems; institutions related problems and student-teachers related problems where financial constraint appears as one of the student-teachers related problems. Ajani-Adeigbe, Abiodun-Oyebanji, Akinwumi and Akinyemi (2018) found no significant difference in financial challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice exercise between student-teachers from the University of Ibadan and the Emmanuel Alayande College of Education.

The fact remains that teaching and learning effectiveness depend on quality and quantity of teachers because there can be no meaningful socio-economic and political development in any country without teachers. Ajani-Adeigbe et al. (2018) revealed that student teachers are less effective in the area of comportment and interpersonal relationship in their respective teaching practice schools. It is on teachers' numbers, quality, commitment and dedication that determine the effectiveness of all educational level, development and growth. Even the educational planners may have the best educational policies and designs, the government may vote the largest sum of its revenue to education, but the ultimate realization of any set of aims for education depends on the teachers. Therefore, it is the teachers who will ultimately be responsible for translating policies into actions and principles into practices while interacting with their students in the classroom setting. Oluwatayo and Adebule (2012) observed that teaching performance of the student-teachers during teaching practice was satisfactory.

However, Komba and Kira (2013) pointed out that there are dissatisfactions on teaching practice effectiveness among education stakeholders which is also attributed to ineffectiveness of teachers after graduation.

Teaching practice is recognised as important aspect of teacher education programme in teacher education institutions worldwide, including Nigeria, under increasing pressure to prepare their student teachers better for the actual world of teaching. The teaching practice, therefore, provides an avenue by which this expectation may be addressed. Teaching practice offers student teachers the opportunity to learn the basic skills of teaching and put their hitherto acquired knowledge into actual practice (Jekayinfa, 2012). The exercise allows student teachers to familiar with educational ethics, and the rules and regulations guiding the practice of education as a professional career. Through the teaching practice exercise, student teachers interact with workload, classroom management, permanent teaching staff and non-teaching staff, school environment, administration and other students in the practice school.

Gujjar (2009) explained the potential of teaching practice to make student-teachers feel fulfilled, grow in knowledge and internalize the enviable culture of teaching, while they are engaged in productive challenges. The student teachers are given the opportunity to experience and 'experiment' their knowledge and skills in an authentic teaching and learning environment during teaching practice exercise. A good teacher education programme should be able to seek the assistance of student teacher to grow and develop as a total person and equip him/her with necessary skills and professional abilities that will help him/her become an effective teacher. Teaching practice is designed to give the student-teachers an opportunity to put into practice, the theories relating to the principles and practice of education, which they have learnt.

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. 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 university supervisor and external examiner determine the quality of teaching and learning of aspiring teacher.

Aspiring teachers are expected to pair with competent and knowledgeable teachers during six weeks or more than six weeks of teaching practice exercise. This will help them to assume the full range of duties of a teacher during this training period. Host teachers are equally vital to influence the aspiring teachers' professional growth and development (Aglazor, 2011). According to National Universities Commission (2017) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (2015), the following sets of objectives have been established for why teaching practice is a mandatory component of teacher training: to expose student-teachers to real life classroom experiences under the supervision of professional teachers; to provide the forum for student-teachers to translate educational theories and principles into practice; 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; to familiarize student-teachers with real school environment as their future work place; to provide student-teachers with an opportunity for further acquisition of professional skills, competencies, personal characteristics and experience for full-time teaching after graduation, to help student-teachers develop a positive attitude towards the teaching profession; to serve as a means of assessing the quality of training being provided by teacher training institutions.

Teaching practice is an opportunity for aspiring teachers to understand the role and operation of how the business of schooling is done. This field experience provides a challenging yet rewarding experience of working with students in actual classrooms and acquiring professional competence. It is believed that these experiences have the potential to enhance the teachers' acquisition of professional competence. Acquired experiences will include among other things, their ability to assume the various responsibilities of the classroom teacher (Saphier, Haley-Speca and Gower, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Teaching practice is an age long practice in the faculty of education, University of Ibadan and beyond. But as old as it may be and with the new trend in teaching, there are serious obstacles affecting the effectiveness of teaching practice exercise in this University and beyond which result to deficient proficiency and competence of the teachers after graduation.

Student-teachers undergoing teaching practice tend to regard it as essentially evaluative programme. They are therefore mainly concerned and interested in the evaluation (grade) aspect. Hence, the tendency to put up a good performance in the presence of the supervisor, the display and usage of teaching material, chalkboard, diagrams and sketches. All in a bid to obtain good grades while the reverse is almost the case when they are not under supervision. The question now is "how ready (mentally) are they to put what they have learnt into practice when they finally go into full-time teaching"? The aftermath is that there will be unemployable teachers who will deform the students instead of informing them. It has, therefore, become imperative that the paper examined the place of teaching practice in Nigerian universities.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the place of teaching practice in Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study sought to find out the level of effectiveness of teaching practice exercise in the Faculty of Education, find out the effect of teaching practice exercise on student teachers and find out the relationship between teaching practice of student teachers and the acquisition of 21st century skills in Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the level of effectiveness of teaching practice exercise in the faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria?
2. What effect does teaching practice exercise have on student teachers in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: there is no relationship between teaching practice of student teachers and the acquisition of 21st century skills in the faculties of education in southwestern Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design since such an approach does not involve any manipulation of variables in the study. The population of the study comprised 734 students who are in 400 level in nine departments in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan. Detail is presented in table 1.

S/No	Departments	400 Level
1	Educational Management (EME)	78
2	Curriculum and Early childhood Foundation (CEF)	32
3	Science and Technology Education (STE)	49
4	Special Education (SPE)	55
5	Library, Archival and Information Studies (LARIS)	70
6	Guidance and Counseling (G and C)	80
7	Arts and Social Science (ASE)	197
8	Adult Education (ADE)	93
9	Kinetics and Health Education (KHE)	80
	Total	734

Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting six departments. The departments include EME-78, SPE-55, LARIS-70, G & C-80, ADE-93 and KHE-80. These departments were selected because they are oldest in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan. Sample size for this study was 320 students. Propionate size to sampling technique was used to select 70% of 400 level students in each department selected for the survey (EME-55, SPE-39, LARIS-49, G&C-56, ADE-65 and KHE-56). The reason for sampling 320 students is that they had completed at least one out of their two teaching practice exercise. Thus, 320 respondents were involved in the study.

The researcher used a self-developed questionnaire for the students in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan and validated by lecturers in the same faculty. The items in the questionnaire were rated on 4-point Likert scale type, rated from Very Small Extent (VSE) = 1, Small Extent (SE) = 2, Large Extent (LE) = 3 and Very Large Extent (VLE) = 4. The study administered 320 questionnaires while 281 copies were successfully retrieved from the respondents. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study from ten students that were different from selected students in order to ascertain the reliability or consistency of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained through Cronbach's Alpha method. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts, simple percentages, mean and standard deviation was employed for research question one and two while Pearson product moment correlation was used to test hypothesis formulated for the study.

Answering Research Questions

Research Question 1: What was the level of effectiveness of teaching practice exercise in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria?

Table 2: Level of Effectiveness of Teaching Practice Exercise

S/N	STATEMENT	VSE	SE	LE	VLE	MEAN ($\bar{X}$)	Std D
1	I do not like the school where I did my teaching practice	69 (24.6)	44 (15.7)	80 (28.5)	88 (31.3)	2.66	1.159
2	The students I taught find it difficult to understand my lesson	86 (30.6)	64 (22.8)	84 (29.9)	47 (16.7)	2.32	1.082
3	Nobody to critic my lesson note	65 (23.1)	124 (44.1)	38 (12.8)	53 (18.9)	2.27	1.026
4	The assistance teacher did not assist me during my teaching practice	60 (21.4)	89 (31.7)	53 (18.9)	76 (27.0)	2.52	1.110
5	Attitude of low esteem feeling from the students they taught	52 (18.5)	79 (28.1)	62 (22.1)	88 (31.3)	2.66	1.106

Key: Very Small Extent (VSE), Small Extent (SE), Large Extent (LE), Very Large Extent (VLE)

Table 2 reveals that 59.8% of the respondents did not like the school where they did their teaching practice to a large extent ($\bar{X}=2.66$) while 46.6% of the student teachers to a large extent said that the students they taught find it difficult to understand their lesson ($\bar{X}=2.32$). The result also indicates that 31.7% of the respondents to a large extent were of the opinion that nobody to critic their lesson note ($\bar{X}=2.27$) while 45.9% of the respondents to a large extent reported that the assistance teacher did not assist them during their teaching practice exercise ($\bar{X}=2.52$). The result equally shows that 53.4% of the respondents to a large extent experienced attitude of low esteem feeling from the students they taught ($\bar{X}=2.66$). Considering the cluster mean of 1 to 5 items on the table 2, three items were rated above the threshold of 2.50 cut off point. This indicates that level of effectiveness of teaching practice exercise in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan is high.

This finding is in agreement with the findings of Oluwatayo and Adebule (2012) who expressed that the teaching performance of the student-teachers during teaching practice was satisfactory. However, the result negates the finding of Komba and Kira (2013) who pointed out that there are dissatisfactions on teaching practice effectiveness among education stakeholders which is also attributed to teachers' effectiveness after graduation.

Research Question 2: What effect did teaching practice exercise have on student teachers in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria?

Table 3: Effect of Teaching Practice Exercise on Student Teachers

S/N	STATEMENT	VSE	SE	LE	VLE	MEAN ($\bar{x}$)	Std D
1	I learnt different teaching techniques during my teaching practice	37 (13.2)	38 (13.5)	65 (23.1)	141 (50.2)	3.10	1.075
2	I acquired more skills in terms of relationship with the students	27 (9.6)	25 (8.9)	100 (35.6)	29 (45.9)	3.17	0.950
3	I learnt more on mastery of subject during my teaching practice	35 (12.5)	35 (12.5)	74 (26.3)	137 (48.8)	3.11	1.049
4	I do not feel like writing lesson note during my teaching practice	42 (14.9)	89 (31.7)	66 (23.5)	81 (28.8)	2.66	1.053
5	My supervisor came only once during my teaching practice	75 (26.7)	61 (21.7)	47 (16.7)	92 (32.7)	2.56	1.210

Very Small Extent (VSE), Small Extent (SE), Large Extent (LE), Very Large Extent (VLE)

Table 3 reveals that 73.3% of the respondents to a large extent learnt different teaching techniques during their teaching practice ($\bar{x}$ =3.10) while 81.5% of the respondents to a large extent acquired more skills in terms of relationship with the students ($\bar{x}$ =3.17). The finding also shows that 75.1% of the respondents to a large extent learnt more on mastery of subject during their teaching practice ($\bar{x}$ =3.11) while 52.3% of the respondents to a large extent did not feel like writing lesson note during their teaching practice ($\bar{x}$ =2.66). The result equally reveals that 49.4% of the respondents to a large extent were of the opinion that their supervisors came only once during their teaching practice ($\bar{x}$ =2.56). Based on the result from table 3, teaching practice exercise had positive effect on student teachers in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan in terms of teaching techniques, mastery of subject, writing of lesson note and skill acquisition.

This finding is in line with the findings of Gujjar (2009) expressed that the potential of teaching practice to make student-teachers feel fulfilled, grow in knowledge and internalize the enviable culture of teaching, while they are engaged in productive challenges. The finding is also in line with Ajani-Adeigbe et al. (2018) who revealed that student teachers are less effective in the area of comportment and interpersonal relationship in their respective teaching practice schools. It is on teachers' numbers, quality, commitment and dedication that determine the effectiveness of all educational level, development and growth

Research hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between teaching practice of student teachers and the acquisition of 21st century skills in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan.

Table 4: Teaching Practice and Acquisition of 21st Century Skills

Variable	N	mean	Standard Deviation	r	P	Remarks
Teaching Practice	281	3.11	1.049	0.011	0.855	Not Sig.
Acquisition of 21st Century Skills		2.62	1.186			

(P> .05)

The results in Table 4 indicated Pearson Product-Moment Correlation showing the relationship between teaching practice of student teachers and the acquisition of 21st century skills. From table 4, there was no significant but a positive weak correlation between teaching practice of student teachers and the acquisition of 21st century skills, $r = (0.011)$, 0.855 , $P > .05$. Based on this research hypothesis 1 which states that “there is no relationship between teaching practice of student teachers and the acquisition of 21st century skills in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan” was therefore retained. This indicates that there is no significant but a positiveweak relationship exists between teaching practice of student teachers and the acquisition of 21st century skills in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan. This finding is in line with the findings of Ajani-Adeigbe, Abiodun-Oyebanji, Akinwumi and Akinyemi (2018) who found no significant difference in financial challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice exercise between student-teachers from the University of Ibadan and the Emmanuel Alayande College of Education.

Conclusion

From the data collected and analysed, the discussions, the literature reviewed and the findings of the study, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions about the study.

Level of effectiveness of teaching practice exercise was found to be high. This could be as result of favourably conducive school environment, well planned and delivered lesson note, high esteem feeling from the students they taught and cooperation received by student teachers from host teachers. Student teachers experience positive effects in terms of teaching techniques, subject mastery, lesson note writing and skill acquisition. Lastly, there are positive relationship between teaching practice of student teachers and the acquisition of 21st century skills in terms of recent curriculum and scheme of work, creativity in teaching, audio-visual instructional materials and digital technology

Recommendations

Based on the findings, discussions and conclusion from this paper, the following recommendations are made:

Government, university management, faculties of education, supervisors, school administrators and host teachers should all work together to keep upon improving effectiveness of teaching practice exercise. Since there is positive effect of teaching practice exercise on student teacher, effort should be made by all concerned stakeholder to improve teaching techniques, mastery of subject, lesson note writing and skills acquisition of student teachers. This will lead to high effective teaching practice exercise among the student teachers. The acquisition of 21st century skills should be taught student teachers from time to time for effective teaching delivery in the classroom setting.

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