



INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS TEACHING PRACTICE EXERCISE IN EKITI STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract:

The study investigated the constraints of teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students. It investigated the benefits or otherwise of teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students. It also examined the level of students' interest in the teaching practice exercise. The study was guided by three research questions. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The sample consisted of two hundred and fifty students purposefully selected from the 300 and 400 Level in the Faculty of Education from which five departments were randomly selected to participate in the study. A self-designed instrument titled "Perception of Students' towards Teaching Practice Exercise Questionnaire (PSTPE-Q)" was used to elicit information on teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. The results showed that the perceived unwillingness of the students' to become teachers after graduating from the university was the major constraint of teaching practice exercise, followed by lodging/accommodation problem. However, period of time allocated for teaching practice was not a constraint. The results also showed that (73%) of the students' perceived teaching practice exercise to be beneficial while (27%) perceived otherwise. Findings from the study further showed that (56%) of the students' showed interest in teaching practice exercise.

Keywords: investigation, students, perception, teaching practice exercise, university

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1. Introduction

Teaching is a deliberate and conscious act of transmitting knowledge, ideas and attitude to the learners who are available to learn. Pre-historically, the sources through which learning takes place could be either a human or an abstract phenomenon. However, the teacher is seen as a custodian of knowledge in our contemporary era. Thus, for his knowledge to be of use to others, there must be a process through which it is transmitted – teaching. Awotua-Efebo (1999) opined that teaching is a human undertaking whose purpose is to help people learn. Teaching as a process of knowledge dissemination is aimed at bringing about an expected change in the learner's behavior. Teachers therefore have enormous responsibilities of helping their students to learn new things through the provision of knowledge. It is therefore inevitable for teacher educators to focus on pre-service training for those who will take teaching as a profession so as to develop their potentials and equip them to perform their future roles as teachers. These potentials include skills in teaching methodology, lesson planning, classroom management and control, critical thinking, decision making and problem solving skill.

Education development of any country all over the world has continued to be intricately tied to the quality of its teachers. Shahin & Alexander (2006) assert that qualified and competent teachers have critical roles to play in determining their country's development and prosperity. Ejima (2012) stated that the quality of a teacher depends on his or her preparation for professional role as a distinct practitioner. There is the need therefore for a teaching practice programme that would expose the prospective teachers to teaching and its routine under the guidance of qualified professionals to develop their skills, knowledge, attitudes and competence in the profession.

2. Teaching Practice Exercise

Teaching practice is an exercise or an act of teaching for a specified period of time with the aim of improving the student teachers' ability to teach satisfactorily and competently as a teacher. The exercise provides trainees the opportunity to utilize the various teaching methods previously exposed to now in actual classroom conditions under constant supervision of experienced teachers. Little wonder that the Nigeria University Commission (NUC) mandates all universities and colleges to expose their education students' adequately to real teaching situation, a practical encounter with the job they are training for. According to Mezieobi, Nwanekezi & Okoli (2011), the teacher

needs to be properly educated and trained for professional efficiency and inculcated with a positive attitude that will enable him/her go through the training properly and come out well equipped for the responsibility ahead.

Teachers are prepared and trained in Nigeria through the colleges of education, the National Teachers Institute (NTI) and Faculties of Education in Nigeria Universities. Thus, those institutions meant for training and the preparation of teachers have teaching practice as a part of their training programmes which is often earmarked for a specific period of time. A period where teachers-in-training are posted to schools to teach, demonstrate in practical terms the theoretical knowledge they have acquired during training. According to Afolabi (1999), teaching practice exercise is to acquaint student teachers with the practical knowledge of teaching and learning process including lesson plan preparation, presentation, class management, communication skills, evaluation and the required personality of professional teachers.

From the foregoing, it can be inferred that teaching practice is not a gainsaying phenomenon or an imaginable cause of action but rather, a practical exercise that trainers in it must practice. It is a process by which student-teacher is given the opportunity to practice the act of teaching before actually getting into the real world of the teaching profession. Kiggundu & Najimuli (2009) asserted that teaching practice is meant to provide for the authentic context within which student teachers are exposed to experiences of the complexities and richness of the reality of being a teacher.

In Ekiti State University and other universities having education as a faculty, teaching practice is a means through which a student's suitability for the teaching profession is practically measured and tested for certification. Teaching practice can be seen as an integral part of teacher education; it is a crucial aspect of teacher education programme in which the would-be teachers are posted to schools to practice the theories and principles of teaching which they have been exposed to initially in the classroom. The purpose of teaching practice is primarily to assist the trainee to acquire practical skills, aptitudes and knowledge through direct experience. Hence, for any student undergoing a course in education, teaching practice is inevitable as the National Policy on Education (2004) asserted that since no education system may arise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development.

Generally, teaching practice exercise involves posting of student teachers to different schools specified by the school authority concerned for a period of weeks which is usually six weeks in Ekiti State University which varies from one institution to the other. However, it is a compulsory exercise that must be carried out by the education students before they can be certified as potential, qualified and professional

teachers. Each student partakes in this exercise twice before graduation. First time runs for six weeks after second semester of their second year (200L) while the second time is also six weeks after second semester of their third year (300L). During these periods, the student teachers' are expected to work under a professional teacher who oversees the activities of the student in training and also promptly supervised by the faculty delegates. According to Daramola (1991), no education programme is complete without a teaching practice exercise which is meant to give the students experience towards becoming a professional teacher.

Contrarily, a general survey among the students shows that, some education students dislike teaching practice programme as they claim not to actually need it being that they are not willing to become teachers after graduating from the university. Some even says that, being into education is by accident in respect to no other alternative at admission. Student teachers tend to have different perception before, during and after the teaching practice exercise. They tend to perceive either positively or negatively to the exercise. Apparently, individual's perception toward their profession has influence on their performance as it affects their competence and outcome. This is why Maliki (2013) stated that the belief someone has about any particular job determined the success of that person in the profession.

3. Statement of the Research Problem

Studies have shown that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers'; teaching practice therefore becomes an important ingredient to improving on the knowledge, skills and classroom experience of the would-be-teachers. It avails student teachers the opportunity to practice the art of teaching before the real job begins. A good teaching practice exercise is expected to stimulate student teachers to be greatly committed to the teaching profession and arouse their interest to making teaching a life career for manpower development. Contrarily, some student teachers instead of being stimulated to be greatly committed to the exercise have always come with constant complaints and attitudes before, during and after every teaching practice exercise. Their attitude to the exercise appears to be at variance to the objective for which it was designed. This invariably would affect the proper implementation of the programme and accounts for the poor quality of teachers in our schools today. This necessitated this research work into the perception of students' towards teaching practice exercise in Ekiti State university; hence this study.

3.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. investigate the constraints of teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students’;
2. investigate the benefits or otherwise of teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students’; and
3. examine the level of students’ interest in the teaching practice exercise.

3.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were asked and answered in the study:

1. What are the constraints’ of teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students’?
2. What are the benefits or otherwise of teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students’?
3. What is the level of students’ interest in the teaching practice exercise?

4. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised students in 300 and 400 Level in the Faculty of Education in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The sample consisted of two hundred and fifty (250) students which were purposefully selected from five departments in the faculty of education. A self-designed instrument titled “Perception of Students towards Teaching Practice Exercise Questionnaire (PSTPE-Q)” was used to elicit information on teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students. Section A of the instrument contained items on respondents’ demographic data. Section B contained items on the perceived constraints’ of teaching practice exercise while Section C contained items on the perceived teaching practice benefits or otherwise. Section D contained items on the level of students’ interest in the teaching practice exercise. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages.

5. Results and Findings

A. Research Question 1: What are the constraints’ of teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students’? In order to answer this research question, data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Constraints' of Teaching Practice Exercise as Perceived by the Students'

S/N	Statements	Agreed	Disagreed
1.	Rejection of students for teaching practice exercise by schools where posted	147 (59%)	103 (41%)
2.	Facilities constraint in the practicing schools	153 (61%)	97 (39%)
3.	Lodging/accommodation problem for students on teaching practice	173 (69%)	77 (31%)
4.	Nonchalant attitude of students towards teaching practice exercise	159 (64%)	91 (36%)
5.	Unwillingness of the students to become teachers after graduating from the university	182 (73%)	68 (27%)
6.	Insufficient period of time allocated for teaching practice	93 (37%)	157 (63%)
7.	Students absenteeism in their practicing schools	139 (56%)	111 (44%)
Average		149 (60%)	101 (40%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

From Table 1, majority of the students agreed to the items on the constraints of teaching exercise as thus: unwillingness of the students to become teachers after graduating from the university (73%), lodging/accommodation problem (69%), nonchalant attitude of students towards teaching practice exercise (64%), facilities constraint (61%), rejection of students for teaching practice exercise by schools where posted (59%) and students absenteeism (56%). This means that the teaching practice exercise is having some constraints for effectiveness. However, (63%) of them perceived the period of time allocated not to be a constraint for teaching practice exercise.

B. Research Question 2: What are the benefits or otherwise of teaching practice exercise as perceived by the students'? To answer this research question, data collected were analyzed simple percentage statistical method as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Benefits or Otherwise of Teaching Practice Exercise as Perceived by the Students

S/N	Statements	Agreed	Disagreed
Teaching practice...			
1.	is worthwhile	224 (90%)	26 (10%)
2.	is an end to teacher education programme	141 (56%)	109 (44%)
3.	is a period of grooming	208 (83%)	42 (17%)
4.	is not a waste of time	183 (73%)	67 (27%)
5.	helps in producing competent teachers	161 (64%)	89 (36%)
6.	provides the students an opportunity to acquire practical skills	174 (70%)	76 (30%)
7.	helps in building teaching skills	185 (74%)	65 (26%)
Average		182 (73%)	68 (27%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

From Table 2 above, the students perceived teaching practice exercise to be beneficial, as a high percentage of them (90%) agreed that the exercise is worthwhile, (83%) sees the exercise to be a period of grooming, (74%) agreed that the exercise helps in building teaching skills, (73%) agreed that the exercise was not a waste of time, (70%) agreed that the exercise provides an opportunity to acquire practical skills, (64%) agreed that the exercise helps in producing competent teachers, (56%) agreed that the exercise is an end to teacher education programme. On the average, the students' perceived benefits' of teaching practice exercise (73%) which is higher than the otherwise (27%). This means that the students' considered teaching practice exercise to be beneficial.

Research Question 3: What is the level of students' interest in the teaching practice exercise? To answer this research question, data collected were analyzed simple percentage statistical method as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Level of Students' Interest in the Teaching Practice Exercise

S/N	Statements	Agreed	Disagreed
1.	Teaching practice is an interesting exercise	135 (54%)	115 (46%)
2.	Teaching practice exercise is a good experience	143 (57%)	107 (43%)
3.	I enjoyed my period of teaching practice exercise	133 (53%)	117 (47%)
4.	I paid adequate attention to every details during teaching practice exercise	148 (59%)	102 (31%)
5.	I consider teaching practice exercise as part of my training for life career	153 (61%)	97 (39%)
6.	Teaching practice is necessary for teacher education programme	190 (76%)	60 (34%)
7.	I was always punctual to my school of practice teaching	85 (34%)	165 (66%)
Average		141 (56%)	91 (44%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The results from Table 3 showed that showed some level of students' interest in teaching practice exercise as (76%) agreed that teaching practice is necessary for teacher education programme, (61%) considered teaching practice exercise as part of their training for life career, (59%) agreed to have paid adequate attention to every details during teaching practice exercise, (57%) agreed that teaching practice is a good experience, (54%) agreed that teaching practice is an interesting exercise while (53%) agreed that they enjoyed their period of teaching practice exercise. On the average, the positive level of the students' interest in teaching practice is (56%) which is higher than that of negative disposition which is (44%). Thus, the level of students' interest to teaching practice exercise could be considered to be averagely good.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was shown that that unwillingness of teachers to become teachers after graduating from the university was the greatest constraints to teaching practice while the period of time allocated for teaching practice was not a constraint. It was also found that higher percentage of the students perceived teaching practice exercise to be beneficial. Finally, it was found that the level of students' interest to teaching practice exercise was averagely good. This indicated that students have high interest in teaching practice exercise. The study therefore concluded that students in Ekiti State University have a good reasonable perception towards teaching practice exercise.

6.1 Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The university should ensure that all student teachers are properly trained in all teaching related courses before proceeding on teaching practice exercise.
2. The faculty management should allow student teachers proximity to schools designated for the practice; this would to some extent reduce the rate of their absenteeism.
3. The university and posted schools should endeavor to also ensure that practicing student teachers are not stranded in terms of accommodation.
4. Students' should utilize the period of teaching practice exercise to acquire professional skills and knowledge so as to be an effective and efficient teachers at certification.
5. Emphasis should continue to be laid on teaching practice exercise as an end to teacher education programme.

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