



EVALUATION OF TEACHING PRACTICE EXERCISE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Evaluation is centrally concerned with the making of value judgments. In the school setting, evaluation underpins the teacher's development of curriculum activities, his/her selection of instructional objectives in his/her day-to-day lesson planning and choice of materials and methods by which to judge the progress of his/her students. Evaluation enables the teacher to make appropriate decisions about his/her on-going classroom activities and to plan future activities more purposefully and effectively in the light of his knowledge of the progress of his/her students. Appropriate decisions, however, depend upon correct judgments and these in turn can only be derived from adequate instruments and applications of knowledge gleaned as a result of training to become a teacher. This paper discussed the evaluation of student-teachers by supervisors who go to the practicing schools to supervise the would-be-teachers (student-teachers) in order to ascertain that the would-be-teachers are putting into practice the theories and methods learnt; as well as an examination process to assess teaching effectiveness to grade the student-teachers. It was recommended that the assessment of student-teachers should be done by both the cooperating teacher (mentor) from the practicing school as well as the visiting supervisor from the training institutions as this is not currently the case.

Keywords: evaluation, teaching practice, student-teachers, Nigeria, quantification of effective teaching

1. Introduction

Teaching practice is an exercise in which the student-teacher is guided to acquire practical skills and competences necessary for effective delivery (teaching) after training. This valuable experience and expertise are usually acquired by exposing

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student-teachers to environment (schools) similar to those in which they hope to work after graduation. The schools that absorbed the student-teachers are called 'cooperating schools'. In such cooperating school, the apprentice teacher (student-teacher) is usually attached to a trained and professional teacher who guides and directs him / her.

This apprenticeship period is very important in the life of a trainee teacher as it should offer him/her the first-hand experience in acquiring practical knowledge and skills of organizing learning. Teaching practice is therefore as important to a would-be teacher as industrial training is to a would-be engineer. Little wonder why Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) the regulatory body of teaching profession in Nigeria is advocating a one full year of teaching practice for would be teachers bringing the training period for a first degree teaching qualification to five years instead of the present four years.

The essence of teaching is to easily effect pre-determined behavioural change in the learner; and because teaching practice prepares the teacher for proper effect, its role in modeling the society can hardly be de-emphasized. But available evidence shows that this important function has not always been met.

2. Professional Expectations of Student-Teachers

The aim of the teaching practice exercise is to help the student-teacher to bridge the gap between theory and practice. It is assumed that by so doing the student-teacher will acquire the skills of diagnosis and analysis of the educational environment. Student practice teaching experience does provide a valuable means for guiding the student-teacher's growth through a carefully set out sequence of activities (which need to be adequately evaluated) which will eventually enable him/her to achieve the followings:

- Clarify student understanding of the purposes, developments, programmes and administrative organization of the education system of the country; widen his/her understanding of curriculum practices;
- Deepen student understanding of the principles of human growth, development and the learning process;
- Be sensitive to the social patterns of a school community and discover through first hand experiences ways of improving curriculum for pupils by effective use of community resources;
- Develop a positive professional attitudes towards other members of the teaching profession;
- Identify personal strengths and weaknesses in the spectrum of competences associated with effective teaching and learning;

- Becoming increasingly resourceful and creative in planning, developing and evaluating effective learning experiences with the pupils.

The above sequence of activities needs to be adequately evaluated as a teaching can be considered to be good if all expectations are constantly realized.

3. Evaluation of Student-Teachers

It is a normal practice that lecturers of training institutions are posted to schools as supervisors to visit the student-teachers and observe the teachings to ascertain how they are practicalising the theories earlier assimilated in the course of their training in school. Supervisors employ a uniform rating scale for this purpose as handed over by the practice teaching co-coordinator. Since it is not convenient to visit the student-teachers regularly, it is then recommended that a three times visit for a particular subject area should be achieved by the supervisors. It is assumed that the first visit should come after one month of the exercise to allow the student-teachers settle into their assignment, the second visit is about the mid of the exercise and the third visit could be three weeks or thereabout before the conclusion of the exercise. **The main aim of this supervision is to offer guidance and assessment in the development of knowledge and skills of teaching.** It is usually not vindictive or vengeful. Eyike (1994) mentions two major considerations of practice teaching supervision as:

- A teaching process that helps the student-teachers to practicalise the theories and methods learnt;
- An examination process to assess teaching effectiveness to grade the student-teachers.

The supervisors' emphasis according to Ekiye (*ibid*) should be on **helping the student-teachers to function and capitalize on their strengths, by pointing out areas that require some improvement.**

Since the student-teachers must attain certain reasonable competences to be accepted as trained teachers, their evaluation must border on aspects of responsibilities which Okorie (1979) [cited in Maduewesi and Azubike, 2011] mentions as:

- Ability to plan for instruction;
- Competency in guiding the experiences of children;
- Class activity and evaluation techniques for participating in school activities.

Such unbiased guidelines can comfortably guide any supervisor in assessing the student-teachers including the rating scale designed by the training institution.

It must be admitted that there are some isolated cases of abuse of this supervisory process, where supervisors fail to visit some student-teachers even once, only to manufacture marks or grades, instead of on the spot assessment of the teaching

behaviours of the student-teacher in the classroom. Also most of the supervisors only manage to visit their scheduled student-teachers once and they are always quick to point accusing fingers on the schools management and population explosion of the student-teachers. There may be some truth in their assertions, but professionals must always be committed or dunces will take over the teaching profession in the nearest future, to teach or cheat our dear children. Some supervisors also go with a pre-determination to victimize or intimidate their student-teachers into amorous submissions or they may not make good grades while others unduly appease the student-teachers with undeserved grades, in order to gain cheap popularity among the student-teachers. All these isolated cases of abuse has not removed any shine from the practice teaching exercise, which has formed the bedrock of teacher training programmes, the world over.

4. Assessment of Teaching Practice Exercise: Quantification of Effective Teaching

Quantification of effective teaching has been made possible by National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). NCCE (2005) came up with a unified assess format for the assessment of teaching practice exercise which is now popular in teacher training institutions in Nigeria. This has help to erase the erroneous conception that teaching cannot be effectively evaluated because of its multifaceted dimensions (i.e. the occurrence of several activities at the same time in the classroom) as a result the exact weighting to attach to different activities and competences were not uniformed.

Table 1: National Commission for Colleges of Education Teaching Practice Assessment Form

S/N	DESCRIPTION	MAX. SCORE	MARKS SCORE
1	LESSON PREPARATION		
	a. Statement of objectives	5	
	b. Content (i) Logical and Sequential	2	
	(ii) Adequacy	3	
2	PRESENTATION		
	a. Introduction	5	
	b. Development of lesson	5	
	c. Mastery of subject	10	
	d. Use of chalk board	5	
	e. Time management skills	5	
	f. Questioning technique	5	
	g. Effective use of instructional materials: relevance, adequacy and variety	5	
	h. Class participation	10	

	i. Summary and conclusion	5	
3	CLASS MANAGEMENT		
	a. Class control	5	
	b. Classroom arrangement	2	
	c. Reactions and reinforcement of pupils' responses	5	
4	COMMUNICATION SKILLS		
	a. Clarity of voice	2	
	b. Appropriate use of language	3	
5	EVALUATION		
	a. Suitability of assessment	5	
	b. Attainment of stated objectives	5	
6	TEACHER'S PERSONALITY		
	a. Neatness/Dressing	4	
	b. Comportment	4	
	TOTAL SCORE	100	

The behaviors and their effects on the learners are weighted according to the degree of relevance and effectiveness. For instance, mastery of the subject matter and competence in facilitating a lively class participation are the attributes with the highest weights (scores - 10) because the competent teacher must be a master in her field and the students must be seen to be actively collaborating, participating and enjoying the learning experiences or packages being exposed. Therefore, effective teaching can easily be quantified using the above format to determine the productive effects of teaching activities on the learners thus allaying the philosophical worries that effective teaching may not be quantifiable.

5. Supervision Techniques

We have examined how we can effectively evaluate/assess the teaching practice exercise, it will be beneficial to know the behavior characteristics expected from any competent supervisor on arrival to practice school for teaching practice assessment. This is because these expected behaviors are already pre-coded under the clinical supervision (clinical supervision is defined as an important element of general supervision, focusing on helping the student-teacher improves on his/her performances through analyses and feedback of the observed elements in the classroom). Afe (1990) implies that clinical approach requires the supervisor to help the student-teachers analyses and understand observed behavior that would help them change and improve when necessary. This ensures that a two-way communication to assessment is initiated and sustained while the supervision lasts.

As earlier mentioned, the ratio of supervision to assessment should be 3:1, which implies that more time and energy should be devoted to improving the teaching behaviours of the student-teachers than rushing to reduce their neophytes' (a beginner or novice at something) performances to numbers and grades. The pattern of clinical supervision is characterized by the following sub-headings:

- **Pre-Observation Conference:** as the name implies, it occurs before the assessment and is unavoidable between the assessor (supervisor) and the assessed (student-teacher) to ensure an establishment of rapport. Though the assessed should have known what is to be assessing through the orientation workshop; the supervisor and the assessed should use the opportunity to amplify those attributes being looked for. It is equally an opportunity to preview the student-teacher's plans for entering behaviours, specific objectives, actual instructions and evaluations as advanced by Robert Gagne's basic teaching model. The pre-observation conference takes the form of re-orientation, which will go a long way to relax the nerves and assessment pressures on the student-teachers, thereby promoting better teaching demonstrations.
- **Actual Classroom Observation:** this is probably the most important aspect of scientific clinical observation, where the supervisor is only concerned with the collection of data on the strengths and weaknesses of the student-teacher while in session. This data can only be collected through clinical observation of classroom performance without interrupting the acting teacher, or the flow of the educational activities going on, all through the duration of the lesson. This ensures that the student-teachers are not humiliated and dehumanized, especially in the presence of their students or learners and provide a conducive opportunity for modification of unacceptable behaviours and applications.
- **Analysis of the Teaching and the Strategies of Feedback:** the supervisor does this quickly on his own and alone, while standing out or seated, depending on the environment of practice school; without involving feedback from the competent supervisor. The supervisor now takes a second look at the observed grey areas and areas of success, before fashioning out a strategy to present a feedback to the student-teacher, without hurting his/her feelings or dampening the student's zeal to become a teacher; rather the approach should be seen to be corrective and diplomatic. **Competent supervisor starts by commending the student-teacher on the little achievements observed in the student teaching, before gradually and tactically calling the student attention to the grey areas and what the student should have done under such situations, to ensure maximum pupil gains.**

- **The Post-Observation Conference:** this marks the end of scientific clinical supervision, where the supervisor presents the student-teacher with a corrective feedback, while alone with the student-teacher and employing the strategy fashioned out in analysis and strategies phase, in order to ensure the steady growth and encouragement of the neophyte teacher. **The post-observation conference should be a two-way communication process (supervisor-talk and student-teacher-talk) to ensure a participatory conference not supervisors shocking it down the throat of the student-teachers.**

6. Conclusion

Having professionally applied the scientific clinical supervision on the overall visit to the practice school, the student-teacher who must be related to have learnt something from the supervisor to enable him/her improve on his/her teaching, now willingly escorts the supervisor to the school gate, before waving goodbye. This is exactly what teaching practice supervision should look like and anything in the contrary may be resisted, because it could be something else and not the normal scientific approach approved by training institutions world over.

One thing that is not acceptable to the teaching profession in this digital age is for non-professional teachers or lecturers to be supervising teaching practice under any guise whatsoever. This can only widen the educational tragedy being bemoaned by the concerned stakeholders in teacher education, where many dunces are already handling chalks in some classrooms, as cheaters and not teachers.

7. Recommendation

Currently, what is in practice in terms of assessment of student-teachers is the report and grading from the supervisors only. This practice is not comprehensive enough as the supervisor visit the student-teacher approximately three times in the six weeks period of the teaching practice. The supervisors' assessment only will not be adequate. It is therefore recommended that the cooperating teacher i.e. the subject teacher in the cooperating or practising school who acts as a mentor to the student-teacher should also report and grade the student-teacher as he/she is in constant (everyday more or less) touch with the student-teacher. Both the cooperating teacher's grade and the supervisor's grade can be merge and the average taken as the grade for the student-teacher.

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