

An Analysis of the Perceived Challenges Faced by Student-Teachers during Teaching Practice Exercise

Dr. (Mrs) Esther Obiageli Okobia¹ Ogumogu Excellent Augustine² Dr (Mrs) Roseline .O Osagie³

* E-mail of the corresponding author: excellent.ogumogu@uniben.edu

1. Department of Educational Psychology And Curriculum Studies, Faculty Of Education, University Of Benin, Benin-City , P.M.B 1154 , Edo State, Nigeria.

2. Department of Educational Psychology And Curriculum Studies, Faculty Of Education, University Of Benin, Benin-City, P.M.B 1154 , Edo State, Nigeria.

3. Department of Educational Studies And Management, Faculty Of Education, University Of Benin, Benin-City, Edo State , P.M.B 1154 , Nigeria.

Abstract

The study investigated the challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice exercise. The survey design was adopted for the study. Simple random technique was used to select two hundred students from 300 and 400 level students who have participated in the teaching practice exercise in 2010/2011 session, Faculty of Education, University of Benin. A twenty one (21) item four point likert scale questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Challenges during Teaching Practice Exercise (QCTP)” was used for data collection. Two research questions and one hypothesis were raised to guide the study. The data collected were analyzed using the mean statistics and the t-test of independent samples. The study revealed that fifteen out of the twenty one items were perceived by majority of student teachers as major challenges faced during teaching practice exercise. Also it was found that school location had no influence on the challenges faced by student teachers. The paper recommended among others that allowances should be given to student teachers for teaching practice exercise just like their counterparts who participate in industrial training in other faculties.

Keywords: Challenges, Teaching Practice, Student Teachers

1. Introduction

The central thrust of reforms in the teacher education programme is to produce teachers who can perform adequately in the world of work and meet the present day challenges. Teaching practice is a vital aspect of the teacher preparatory programme in teacher training institutions and in Faculties of Education in Nigerian universities. It serves as an opportunity for student-teachers to be exposed to the realities of teaching and professional activities in the field of education.

Every profession has its own practical side; the training of lawyers, doctors, engineers and other well known professions make adequate provision for practical work which forms an integral part of the total training of the professions, hence the teaching practice exercise is the practical aspect of the teacher education programme. A sound professional preparation is necessary for successful teaching profession and teaching practice constitutes an important and indispensable component of the process involved in the adequate preparation of professional teachers.

According to Adesina, Daramola and Taiabi (1989) teaching practice can be defined as a teacher education programme or activity which involves the student-teacher putting into practice his/her acquired theory of teaching under the genuine experience of the normal classroom situation. It is an opportunity for student teachers to face the realities of their chosen career in terms of its demands, challenges and excitements. It can also be seen as periods when student teachers are aided to put into practice the theories and principles of education which they have learnt in the classroom as they teach (Ogonor and Badmus, 2006).

The aim of the teaching practise exercise according to Ogonor and Badmus (2006) are:

- to provide the teacher trainee some type of pre-service training which serves as an opportunity to be exposed to the realities of teaching and performance of professional activities.
- it provides opportunities for students to test theories learnt and ideas in the classroom as they come in contact for the first time with real life situations.
- it provides trainees the opportunity to utilize the various teaching methods in actual classrooms/school conditions under the constant supervision of competent and experienced teachers.
- it exposes student teachers to professional activities, which are part of the teacher roles in schools.

Also the teaching practice exercise enables the students to be more familiar with variety of instructional materials and resources, evaluate and select those materials appropriate for the objectives in a teaching unit or lesson (Afolabi, 2000). Anupama (2009) summed this up by stating that the positive side of the whole exercise of teaching practice is to give sense of accomplishment to student teachers. They learn to take responsibility,

gain confidence and improve upon their classroom management skills.

In University of Benin, the teaching practice exercise is a compulsory course for students both at the penultimate and final levels of the Bachelor of Education programme, the teaching practice exercise is a 6-week duration programme which is a co-operative venture involving both the student-teachers and supervisors (usually academic staff of the Faculty of Education). The teaching practice exercise is the equivalent of industrial training in Engineering, Sciences and other professions.

Subjects in curriculum and teaching methods offered in the Bachelor of Education programme are intended to prepare students teachers in the pedagogical skills in specific subjects. Ojoawo (1996) like other educators is of the opinion that the theoretical dimension takes care of the acquisition of theoretical knowledge in the classroom while the practical dimension constitutes all forms of pre-service contact with the act of teaching in the classroom. Links between theory and practice are emphasized in education programme so that students could draw close professional links between the universities and the secondary schools where they are prepared to function as teachers. Urevbu (2004) noted that the knowledge and skills acquired are demonstrated before examiners who give feedbacks so as to improve their practise before they are finally evaluated. Teaching practice creates a mixture of anticipation, anxiety and apprehension in the student teachers as they commence their teaching practice (Manion, Keith, Morrison & Cohen, 2003). According to Perry (2004), teaching practice is exciting but challenging. It is against this backdrop that this study tries to examine the challenges faced by student teachers during the teaching practice exercise.

2. Statement of the Problem

Teaching practice is a period when student teachers are given opportunity to try the art of teaching before actually getting into the real world of teaching profession. In spite of the observed relevance and purpose of the teaching practice exercise in teacher preparatory programme, a number of challenges appear to hamper the optimum realization of its objectives in the professional growth of students in training. Many student teachers get agitated about entering the classrooms to take up teaching tasks in unfamiliar environment. According to Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) such mixed feelings can contribute to the making or discouraging of a student teacher. Hence the focus of this study is to investigate the various challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice exercise.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify various challenges faced by student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise and also to proffer solutions to those challenges.

4. Research Questions

Arising from the problem, two research questions were raised for this study:

- 1) What are the challenges faced by students teachers during the teaching practise exercise?
- 2) Is there a significant difference between the mean scores of the students teachers in urban and rural schools on the challenges faced during teaching practice exercise?

5. Research Hypothesis

Only research question two was hypothesized for this study;

- 1) There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the student teachers in urban and rural schools on the challenges faced during teaching practice exercise.

6. Research Methodology

The study employed the Survey Research design. It involved collection of data from students on the various challenges they faced during the teaching practice exercise.

The population for the study was all the penultimate and final year students (300 and 400 level students) of 2010/2011 session from the five departments in Faculty of Education, University of Benin which is a total of 1050 students. The researchers used the stratified sampling technique in selecting 40 student-teachers from each of the five departments. Hence a total number of 200 student-teachers were randomly selected for the study.

The instrument used for the study was designed by the researchers and it was titled "Questionnaire on Challenges during Teaching Practice Exercise (QCTP)". There are two sections of the questionnaire, A & B. Section A sought to obtain personal information about the student-teachers (respondents), while Section B contains the perceived challenges that are likely to be faced by the student-teachers. The Section B contains 21-items of four-Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2) and Strongly Disagree (D = 1) which the student teachers responded to. The instrument was validated by two lecturers in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin who were not members of the study team. To determine the reliability of the

instrument, the instrument was pilot tested with twenty five student teachers who were not involved in the study. Data collected was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha techniques, the reliability co-efficient was found to be 0.62. The data collected were analyzed using the mean statistics and the t-test of independent samples. A mean value of 2.5 was used as the cut-off point(test mean), so any items that have a mean of 2.5 and above was considered as a challenge faced by student-teachers.

7. Results

The research questions and the hypothesis raised for the study were carefully answered and tested respectively.

Research Question 1: What are the challenges faced by student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise?

Table 1: Perceived Challenges faced by Student-Teachers during the Teaching Practice Exercise.

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	RANK	DECISION
1.	Time for the Teaching Practice exercise is short	2.54	14	Challenge
2.	Lack of co-operation from the subject teachers or school based supervisors	2.37	19	Not a Challenge
3.	Lack of accommodation during the teaching practice programme.	3.69	1	Challenge
4.	Lack of Instructional materials and resources in schools	3.11	5	Challenge
5.	No allowances for student teachers during teaching practice exercise	3.32	4	Challenge
6.	Inadequate teaching practice orientation before the commencement of teaching practice exercise	3.01	6	Challenge
7.	Difficulty getting transport to school posted to	2.11	21	Not a Challenge
8.	Poor relationship between student-teachers and school based teachers	2.39	17	Not a Challenge
9.	Secondary school students not receptive to student teachers	2.47	16	Not a Challenge
10.	Poor interpersonal relationship between faculty supervisor and student-teachers during supervision	2.94	7	Challenge
11.	Lecture periods on campus clashing with the students teaching practice exercise	3.63	2	Challenge
S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	RANK	DECISION
12.	Lack of provision for field trip or excursion when necessary	3.33	3	Challenge
13.	Rejection of student-teacher to schools posted	2.89	8	Challenge
14.	Too much workload or responsibility for student teachers in schools	2.84	9	Challenge
15	Student teachers are not formally introduced to permanent teachers thus making them feel inferior and not part of the school teachers	2.35	18	Not a Challenge
16	Lack of respect for student teachers in the schools posted.	2.60	13	Challenge
17	Student teachers excluded from the staff meetings	2.79	11	Challenge
18	Difficulty in planning lesson notes	2.12	20	Not a Challenge
19	Difficulty in managing students with different skills	2.63	12	Challenge
20	Student teachers were faced with poor learning environment and overcrowded classrooms	2.80	10	Challenge
21	Teaching practice is a period of stress for student teachers	2.51	15	Challenge

(Test mean=2.5)

The table above shows the various perceived challenges faced by student teachers during the teaching practice

exercise. A mean value of 2.5 was used as the test mean(cut off point). Any item with a mean of 2.5 and above was considered to be actually a challenge faced by majority of the student-teachers. Hence by this set rule, 15 out of the 21 perceived challenges listed above were considered to be actually the challenges faced by majority of the student-teachers while the remaining 6 perceived challenges were considered minor challenges faced by majority of the students-teachers .

Research Question 2 was hypothesized and tested

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the student teachers in urban and rural schools on the challenges faced during teaching practice.

Table 2: t-test analysis between mean scores of student-teachers in urban and rural schools

Location	N	X	S. D	Df	t	sig	Decision
Urban	116	59.40	5.49	198	1.76	0.08	Retained
Rural	84	58.03	5.33				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Testing the hypothesis at $\alpha = 0.05$, $df = 198$, a t-value of 1.76 which is significant at 0.08 was obtained. Since the significant value of 0.08 is greater than the α value of 0.05, then the null hypothesis is retained. This implies that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of student teachers on the challenges faced in urban and rural schools.

8. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that majority of the student teachers indicated that out of the 21 perceived challenges identified, 15 were the major challenges faced by majority of them. The challenges faced by the student-teachers are items 1,3,4,5,6,10,11,12, 13,14,16,17,19,20 and 21. The other 6 perceived challenges (item 2,4,7,8,15 and 18) identified were considered minor challenges faced during the teaching practice exercise. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Akpede (2011), whose study revealed that student teachers faced a lot of challenges including lack of accommodation, lack of co operation from school based teachers, lack of instructional materials and resources in schools, lack of allowances, excess work load and lack of respect for student teachers. In a similar study by Nwanekezi, Okoli and Mezieobi (2011)) carried out at university of Portharcourt, some of the problems identified were:

- Lack of necessary equipments and materials for student teachers.
- Poor learning environment in the practicing schools like congested classrooms, poor ventilation.
- Rejection of student teachers by schools
- Lack of transportation and inaccessibility of some schools.
- Unwillingness of student teachers to report at their duty post

Majority of the student-teachers ranked items 3 and 11 as most challenging, that is majority of the student-teachers complained that the schools where they were posted for teaching practise exercise did not provide accommodation for them, as a result many had to use their personal money to rent accommodation for themselves. Also majority of the student-teachers complained that during the teaching practice exercise, lectures were still going on in the servicing departments, this affected their full participation in the teaching practice exercise as some of them had to sneak out to attend lectures at the time they are suppose to be in their duty post.

This study also revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of student teachers in urban and rural schools on the challenges they faced during the teaching practice exercise. This finding thus confirms the finding of Akpede (2011) which reported that school location had no significant influence on the challenges faced by student teachers during the teaching practice exercise. That is to say student-teachers are likely to face similar challenges no matter the location or area they are posted to.

9. Conclusion

This study indicated that student teachers faced a lot of challenges during their teaching practice programme. Majority of the perceived challenges identified in this study were ranked by student teachers as major challenges. However the study revealed that location of schools had no influence on perceived challenges faced by student teachers

10. Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made

- Appropriate arrangement should be made with schools that will be used for the teaching practice exercise, so as to enable the committee on teaching practice know exactly how many students are to be posted to

schools and also the subject area where there is dire need. This will help the committee to post students to schools appropriately, so as to avoid the problem of rejection of student teachers in schools.

- Allowance should be given to student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise so as to motivate them just like their counterpart in engineering, accounting and the likes.
- Government should provide adequate instructional materials and resources to public schools, so as to enhance teaching in schools. This will also give student teachers opportunity to practice the use of instructional materials during pre-service training.
- The teaching practice committee should organize effective and adequate orientation for student-teachers before going for the teaching practice exercise since it was revealed in this study that majority of the student-teachers complained that they were not given adequate teaching practice orientation. Organizing such programme will equip student teachers with the task ahead of them.
- There is need for good relationship between student teachers and permanent teachers in schools so as to enable student teachers achieved the desired outcomes from the teaching practice exercise.
- Schools where student-teachers are posted to should try as much as possible to provide accommodation for the student-teacher, but if this is not possible it should be monetized for them so as to reduce the financial burden on the student teachers.
- Appropriate arrangement should be made by the teaching practice committee to ensure that student teachers are posted to the schools where they are needed in order to avoid the situation of rejection of student teachers.
- The teaching practice exercise should be properly organized to ensure that it does not clash with lecture periods. This exercise is more appropriate when universities are on holidays and the secondary schools are in session.

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