

Assessment of Attitude of Education Students towards Teaching - practice in Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nigeria

Farauta¹ Kaleptwa G. (PhD) Amuche² Chris Igomu

1. Vocational Education Department, Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, Adamawa State.

2. Faculty of Education, Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State.

E-mail correspondence Author: ehcumach2000@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper is a descriptive survey which sought to assess the attitude of student-teachers towards teaching practice. This study was conducted in the Faculty of Education, Nasarawa state University Keffi. The sample comprised of 150 students who were on teaching practice in 2010/2011 Session, 20 principals and 40 teachers of practicing schools were drawn by simple balloting. Four research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Two instruments (TPQ and TPAQPT) were developed by the researchers and used for data collection. The instruments were validated and an internal consistency of 0.80 and 0.76 respectively were calculated using Cronbach Alpha techniques. Data was analyzed using means and z-Test statistics. The findings revealed that (i) students show a positive attitude towards teaching practice. (ii) female students showed more positive attitude to teaching practice than male students. Also, problems militating against effective teaching practice were determined. It was concluded that if all the strategies for improving students attitude towards teaching practice would be adopted the students' attitude towards teaching practice, no doubt, will be affected positively. Based on the findings, recommendations were made among others that the Faculty should have a micro-teaching laboratory where the students will be well exposed to the rudiments of teaching before they should be sent to schools for actual practice.

Keywords: Attitude, Teaching practice, Micro-teaching laboratory, Actual practice

1. Introduction

Education has been described as the bedrock of every society and tool for nation building. For quality education to be achieved in a nation the principal actors of learning who the teachers must be professionally trained. In other words, the teacher must be adequate in quality and quantity. Students must be well trained and facilities must be provided as well for effective teaching and learning. Teachers have been shown to have an important influence on students' academic achievement and they also play a crucial role in educational attainment because the teacher is ultimately responsible for translating policy into action and principles based on practice during interaction with the students (Afe 2001). The teacher has the responsibility of translating educational policies into practice and programmes into action. Both teaching and learning depends on teachers: no wonder an effective teacher has been conceptualized as one who produces desired results in the course of his duty as a teacher (Uchefuna, 2001). Practice teaching occupies a key position in the programme of teacher education. It is a culminating experience in teacher preparation. It provides opportunity to beginning teachers to become socialized into the profession (Furlong et al., 1988). Performance during practice teaching provides some basis for predicting the future success of the teacher. Outgoing popularity and centrality of practice teaching is an important contributing factor towards the quality of teacher education programme.

However, teacher education programmes are carried out mostly in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. This is targeted at meeting the desired teacher demand in the country. There is no teacher education programme that can be said to be complete without an effective Student Teaching Practice programme (NOUN, 2010). Although, there is a school of thought, which says that "teachers are born, not trained", the overwhelming view today is that there is a need for professionally trained teachers to teach in our schools. This view was echoed by a former Minister of Education, Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa who expressed his belief that "a good teacher education programme must seek to assist the individual teacher to grow and develop as a person, provide him with the necessary skills and professional abilities that will help him become an effective teacher". The type of teacher education under discussion can only be provided through several strategies, one of which is Student Teaching Practice (STP). Therefore, the concept of STP is deeply rooted in the drive towards the education and training of competent and professional teachers.

The term STP is defined differently by many educationists. A few of these definitions are, however, worthy of note. Student Teaching Practice is a pre-service professional preparation for interested persons, aspiring to become teachers with a credible vision for sustainable human development (Oyekan, 2000). According to Salawu and Adeoye (2002), Student Teaching Practice is a practical teaching activity by which the student -teachers are given an opportunity in actual school situation to demonstrate and improve training in pedagogical skill over a period of time. Also, Student Teaching Practice is a kind of apprenticeship stage during

which the students are sent out to school to gain practical and professional experience by translating all the educational theories they have acquired or learnt during training into practice (NOUN, 2010). This conceptualization and that of Adeoye (2002) are modified as:

a practical teaching activity by which the student-teacher (under the supervision of a teacher trainer) is given opportunity in actual school situation within a given period of time to demonstrate, gain practical knowledge and professional experience by translating educational theories into practice.

Whatever definition is given to STP, the most important thing is that it is a professional exercise which is focused on helping the student-teacher to bridge the gap between theory and practice in education.

In many higher institutions in Nigeria, there is a general consensus on the negative attitude of the student-teacher. Unfortunately, what Nigeria is battling with now is a sluggish system eroded by “examination malpractices, cultism, truancy, drug abuse and academic incompetence...” (FME, 2007). While acknowledging that many factors even outside the school (e.g. parents) influence students’ achievements as noted by Education for All Global Report (UNESCO, 2005). Research has however shown that the quality of classroom teachers has the greatest impact on the performance level of students (Izumi & Evers, 2002) and is “the key to school improvement” (Welberg, 2002). Although, the quality of a teaching force cannot be determined solely by the quality of their training, the latter plays significant role in preparing such teachers for the teaching tasks ahead.

In view of the above, only a virile and proactive teaching force through an equally vibrant and transformational teacher education with adequate support system can guarantee Nigerians transformation agenda through the classroom. The situation seems worrisome as evident in various negative reports on STP in Nigerian tertiary institutions. For example, The National University Commission (NUC) (2005) reported that over 80% of persons surveyed felt that Education graduates produced “in the last ten (10 years) have no strength (Okebukola, 2005). In fact, the impression one gets from the report is that these graduates have nothing to offer as teachers because they were even rated low in the few areas where they were said to be positive such as willingness to learn (11.6%); punctuality school (5.4%) and ability to discipline (8.0%). In addition, the study identified the following weaknesses: - inadequate exposure to teaching practice (lack of practical skills); poor classroom management and control; shallow subject – matter knowledge; poor computer skills; inability to communicate effectively in English; lack of professionalism; lack of self-reliant and entrepreneurial skills; and poor attitude to work. The report went further to list specific subject areas where the Education graduates are lacking especially in sciences and English Language. The teacher producing centres in the country have therefore made teaching practice a prerequisite for certification.

The Faculty of Education anywhere in the world is saddled with three basic mandates namely: training and producing high quality teachers, research and community service. The three roles are actually complementary and expected to be balanced. However, the core business of a Faculty of Education is in teacher education. This function is now being called to question in Nigeria. Two major challenges trail education, namely access and quality. The latter is more difficult to achieve (Ijaiya, 2001). With teacher education, it is even more difficult because of the dynamic nature of teaching. A closer look at the graduate teachers being produced in recent years raises some fundamental questions about the training process: Do student-teacher carry out teaching adequate teaching practice while in training? What is the attitude of student- teachers’ towards teaching practice? What strategies can be adopted to enhance positive attitudinal dispositions among students in terms of teaching practice? These are some of the questions addressed in this paper.

1.2 Historical development of the Faculty of Education in Nigeria

The Faculty of Education (FE) in Nigeria came on board in 1961 when it was decided at a national conference organized by the University of Nigeria, Nsukka that three years B.A. (Ed) and B.Sc. (Ed) degree would be better for teacher training instead of the then existing one year Post Graduate Diploma Education (PGDE) course run by the Institute of Education (Nwanekezi, Okoli & Meziobi, 2011). The latter required graduates to come back for additional one year in the university to qualify as teachers but was unpopular among undergraduate students at that time ((Fafunwa, 2002). The new programmes required the undergraduate teacher trainees to come in with A’ Level results and spend 3 years, taking two teaching subjects in addition to Educational Foundation and Methodology courses as well as Teaching Practice (TP) to qualify as teachers. A recent addition to this is the B.Ed programme, which brought in specialized subjects like Educational Management / Educational Administration and Planning; Educational Guidance and Counseling, Educational Test and Measurement, etc. As at 2005, there were 46 Faculties of Education and five approved Colleges of Education, which award degrees in teacher education and together 10,000 trained graduate teachers are released to the market every year (Okebukola, 2005). The B.A. (Ed), B. Sc. (Ed) and B.Ed. degree programmes are available as full time and Part/time/Sandwich courses. The contents of teacher education have been fairly

consistent following the tradition of theoretical courses in Education, teaching subjects and 12 or 6 weeks of supervised Teaching Practice (TP) exercise.

Although microteaching, meant to be practical is implied in the curriculum, it is mostly taught theoretically with 30 minutes or less peer-teaching, which value is very doubtful. Innovations in teacher education in Nigeria had always been a game of expansion- by addition, of new programmes, over – population of students far beyond the Benchmark and what the Faculties can reasonably cope with. It is important at this point to highlight the goals of teacher education in Nigeria as contained in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004): (i) produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educations system; (ii) encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers; - help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national objectives; provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world; (iii) enhance teacher’s commitment to the teaching profession; high premium is placed on teaching practice because it enables the students practicalize all the theoretical teachings on the educations principles and practice.

Teaching practice is the name of the preparation of student teachers for teaching by practical training. It is the practical use of teaching methods, teaching strategies, teaching principles, teaching techniques and practical training and practice or exercise of different activities of daily school life. It is a cardinal and indispensable aspect in the preparation of teachers. It is the common professional element in the preparation of trainee teachers. The concept of teaching practice is made clearer by looking at some of the objectives of teaching practice as enumerated by Akbas (2002), as follows:

1. To provide prospective teachers with the opportunity of establishing an appropriate teacher pupil relationship.
2. To provide an opportunity for evaluating the students potential as a teacher and suitability for the teaching profession.
3. To develop personal relationship with others administrators, teachers, parents and students.
4. To provide the future teacher with experience in school to overcome the problems of discipline and enable him/her develop method of control.
5. To provide an opportunity to put theories into practice and develop deeper understanding of educational principles and their implications for learning.
6. To enable the student teachers effectively plan and prepare lessons.
7. To develop skill in the use of fundamental procedures, techniques and methods of teaching
8. To develop desirable professional interest attitudes and ideas relative to teaching profession.
9. To enable student teachers acquire desirable characteristics/traits of a teacher and to display appropriate behaviour.
10. To provide student teachers with opportunity to have teaching evaluation and to gain from constructive criticism.
11. To provide an opportunity for self evaluation and to discover ones strength and weaknesses.

2. Statement of the Problem

Iniobong (2008) opined that the future of any nation depends on the quality of teachers. The maxim that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers and that no nation can rise above the level of its teaching staff shows the role of the teacher and teacher education programmes in national development. With the introduction of 9-3-4 educational system in Nigeria, only well trained teachers can successfully translate the objectives of the system to reality. Education is the key to national development and only teachers hold the key and can turn it to national development (Lassa, 1996). In order to acquire practical professional experience to meet up with the above task, the trainee teachers are sent on teaching practice. This enable the prospective teachers to be well prepared for the assumption of duty as professionally, motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teacher who will encourage the spirit of inquiry, creativity and intellectual development among the beneficiaries of educational system. The problem of the study therefore, is to ascertain the attitude of the students’ teachers towards teaching practice.

3. Purpose of the Study

In general terms, the purpose of this study is to assess the attitude of student-teachers in the Faculty of Education (Nasarawa State University Keffi) towards teaching practice. Specifically, the study sought to:

- (i). determine whether male student-teachers differ in attitude from that of their female counterpart.
- (ii). identify the problems facing practical teaching by student teachers in Nasarawa State university, Keffi.
- (iii). Identify strategies for improvement in the attitude of the student teachers in Nasarawa State university, Keffi.

4. Research Questions

1. What is the attitude of the student teachers towards teaching practice?
2. What is the difference in attitude between male student-teachers and Female student-teachers towards teaching practice?
3. What are the problems facing practical teaching by student teachers in the Nasarawa state University Keffi?
4. What are the strategies for improving the attitude of student teachers towards teaching practice?

5. Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in attitude between male and female student-teachers towards teaching practice (H_01).

6. Methodology

6.2 Design of the Study

The design of the study is a descriptive survey which attempts to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of the population.

6.3 Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Nasarawa State University Keffi Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

6.4 Population of Study

The target population comprised of all the students in 300 levels in Faculty of Education (2010/2011 session) who were on teaching practice, all the principals and teachers of the school used for teaching practice.

6.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

Simple balloting was used to choose 50 students (25 male and 25 female) from each of the three Departments in the Faculty of Education who were on teaching practice, 20 principals and 40 teachers of the schools used for teaching practice. The total sample used for the study was 210.

6.6 Instrument for Data Collection

Two Instruments for data collection was developed by the researchers. The Teaching Practice Questionnaire for students (TPQS) and the Teaching practice Assessment Questionnaire for Principals and Teachers of practicing schools (TPAQPT). The TPQS was a 30-item questionnaire made of four sections. Section A borders on personal data of the student like, academic level, sex and department. Section B sought to elicit information on the degree of agreement with the item statement on student-teacher attitude presented in the questionnaire. Section C sought to elicit information on the problems facing teaching practice in Nasarawa State University Keffi, while Section D was structured to elicit responses from student-teachers on strategies to enhance positive attitudes towards teaching practice. Also, the TPAQPT was a 10-item questionnaire made of two sections A and B. while section A sought personal information on teachers and principals, section B sought to elicit information on the degree of agreement with the item statements on their observation on student-teachers' attitude towards teaching practice in their respective schools. The modified likert scale was used and the weightings were: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The average of these points is 2.50. This would be used in data analysis.

6.7 Validation of the Instrument

The instruments were face validated by three experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation. They were expected to validate the instrument in terms of relevance to the topic, ambiguity of statement, clarity of language and adequacy of the items. The experts, after examining the instrument made some corrections which were effected in the final draft of the instrument. From the rating of the instrument given by the experts, logical validity indices of 0.80 and 0.76 were obtained for TPQS and TPAQPT respectively. These indicated that the instrument is suitable to measure what it was designed to measure.

6.8 Reliability of the Instrument

The instruments were trial-tested on 25 students, 5 teachers and 4 principals who were not part of the sample but belong to the population of the study. The reliability indices of 0.82 and 0.73 were obtained using Cronbach Alpha technique. These values were deemed appropriate for the instruments to be used for the study.

6.9 Method of Data Collection

The researchers distributed the questionnaires with the aid of lecturers who supervised students on teaching practice. The questionnaires were retrieved using the "wait- and- take" method.

7. Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive data analysis (mean and decision) were used to answer the research questions. A mean of 2.50 and above indicates agreement with the item statement while a mean of 2.49 and below indicate disagreement. For ease of analysis of the research question 1, a mean of 2.50 and above was regarded as positive attitude while 2.49 and below was regarded as negative attitude. In research question 3 and 4, a mean of 2.50 was taken as "agree"

2.49 and below as “disagree”. The null hypothesis was tested using z-test statistics at $P < 0.05$.

8. Results

The results were presented in line with the research questions and hypothesis.

Table 1(a) Mean Ratings of the Student-Teachers on Their Attitude towards Teaching Practice

S/N	Items on the Attitude of Student Teachers Towards Teaching Practice	TP Students Rating	
		Male student	Female TP student
1	I prefer being supervised by my lecturers	2.76 (positive)	2.72 (positive)
2	Teaching practice is very good experience and should not be scraped.	2.55 (positive)	2.66 (positive)
3	I am always regular to school	2.51 (positive)	2.65 (positive)
4	I teach all my lessons with instructional materials	2.65 (positive)	2.67 (positive)
5	I like to teach my lesson than watching the regular teacher use my lesson period	2.66 (positive)	2.90 (positive)
6	I am always there at my school location whether I have period whether I have period to teach or not.	2.70 (positive)	3.10 (positive)
7	I have never been absent from my school location since I was posted to the school.	2.53 (positive)	2.55 (positive)
8	I am always ready with my lesson notes	2.52 (positive)	2.64 (positive)
9	Teaching practice is a fun and should be extended to one year.	2.23 (negative)	2.10 (negative)
10	I have mutual understanding with my students and the school authority.	2.34 (negative)	2.32(negative)
		Mean = 2.55 SD = 0.15	Mean = 2.63 SD = 0.26

Table 1(b) Mean rating on the observed attitude of the Student-teachers towards Teaching Practice by the Practicing schools

S/N	Observed attitude of the students towards Teaching Practice	Principal	Teachers
	Observed attitude in the students during Teaching Practice		
1	Diligent to duty	2.50 (positive)	2.78 (positive)
2	Regularity to school	2.67 (positive)	2.90 (positive)
3	Punctuality to school	2.51 (positive)	2.71(positive)
4	Obedient/respect to school authority	2.51 (positive)	2.62 (positive)
5	Decency in dressing	2.34 (Negative)	2.40 (positive)
6	Prompt report to the school location	2.22 (Negative)	2.32 (negative)
7	Ability to teach	2.21 (Negative)	2.24 (negative)
8	Good relationship with teachers and students	2.59 (positive)	2.78 (positive)
9	Resourceful	2.56 (positive)	2.70 (positive)
10	Readiness to take instruction/corrections	2.71 (positive)	3.02 (positive)

Table 1(a) reveals that the mean ratings of the students showed that the respondents scored up to 2.50 and above showing that they have positive attitudes in all the listed items except in 5 and 6 and 7 where the principals and teachers scored below acceptable mean (2.34 and 2.40) , (2.22 and 2.32) and (2.21 and 2.24) respectively.

Table 2: Mean Ratings on the Problems facing Teaching Practice in Nasarawa state University Keffi

S/N	Items on the problem facing teaching practice	Students' Rating	Remark
11	Inaccessibility of some school locations by students and lecturers	2.21	Disagree
12	Lack of transportation fare on the part of the student teachers	2.56	Agree
13	Lack of accommodation for the student teachers especially those posted very far from the university	3.43	Agree
14	Short practicing period	3.12	Agree
15	Poor learning environment in the practicing schools, such as class congestion, poor ventilation, poor facilities and equipment	3.56	Agree
16	Few number of practicing schools within Keffi town	2.11	Disagree
17	Unwillingness of the students to report to their school locations	2.02	Disagree
18	Lack of necessary equipment, facilities and materials for preparation of the students before sending them out for teaching practice	3.77	Agree
19	Inadequate preparation of students for teaching practice	3.22	Agree
20	Rejection of students by some schools in Keffi	1.50	Disagree

Table 2 reveals that the mean ratings of the students shows that the respondents scored up to 2.50 and above, showing that all the respondents agreed that all the listed items are the problems facing teaching practice. Also, Table 3 below reveals that the mean responses of the students reached to the acceptable mean of 2.50 and above. This is an indication that all the designated strategies should be adopted for improvement in the attitude of the students on teaching. Table 4 below also shows that z (calculated) = -65.31 is less than z (table) = - 1.96. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis of no significant difference. This shows that there is a significant difference in attitude between male and female students towards teaching practice.

Table 3: Rating on Strategies for Improving Students Attitude Towards Teaching Practice

S/N	Items on strategies to improve the attitude of the students towards teaching practice	TP Students (Mean rating)	Remark
21	Students should be well prepared before posting to schools	2.68	Agree
22	Students should be briefed before reporting to their school locations	3.32	Agree
23	Teaching practice handbook should be made available to students-teachers	2.66	Agree
24	Lecturers should inform the students when they want to visit each school supervision	3.68	Agree
25	Lecturers should not collect gifts either in form of money or materials from student-teachers	3.60	Agree
26	The school authority should liaise with far school locations to arrange accommodations for the student-teachers	3.30	Agree
27	The university buses should be used to convey the students to their various school locations	4.20	Agree
28	University should give each practicing students some financial support for their upkeep during the period of teaching practice	3.50	Agree
29	Student-teachers should be sent to good schools, considering the accessibility and nearness to the university	3.22	Agree
30	Micro-teaching laboratory should be put in place and be used to groom the students well enough before teaching practice	3.00	Agree

Table 4: Z-Test Analysis for Difference between two means

	N	Mean	SD	Z (Cal)	F-Critical	Remark
Male	75	2.55	0.1543	- 65.31	- 1.96	Significant to reject H_0
Female	75	2.63	0.2609			

9. Discussion of Findings

In Table 1, the mean ratings of the student-teachers, the principals and teachers indicated generally that the students have positive attitude towards teaching practice except that some would not report promptly to their school locations and sometimes they would not be punctual to school. This might be due to inaccessibility of some school locations, far distance from the university. In Table 2, the mean ratings of student-teachers indicated

agreement that all the listed items are problem facing teaching practice in Nasarawa State University. The z-test analysis of means reveals that there is a statistical significant difference in the attitude of male students and that of female students towards teaching practice. Also, female students show more positive attitude to teaching practice than male students. In response to research question 3, the respondents agreed that all the stipulated strategies would be adopted to ensure positive attitude by the students towards teaching practice. This shows that the students are unanimous in their mean ratings. One could therefore conclude that students of Faculty of Education of the Nasarawa State University Keffi have positive attitude towards teaching practice, and, if all the stated strategies would be adopted, no doubt, the students' attitude towards teaching practice will be affected positively.

10. Conclusion

The attainment of quality education will be a mirage without adequate preparation of manpower that will dispense the knowledge. This calls for serious consideration of stipulated strategies to be adopted.

11. Recommendations

In order to build positive attitude of students towards teaching practice in Nigerian Universities, we recommended as follows:

1. Faculty should have a micro-teaching laboratory where students will be well exposed to the rudiments of teaching.
2. There should be teaching practice handbook for the students to have a uniform method of writing lesson notes. Rules and regulations of practical teaching will also be stipulated in this hand book.
3. Students should be sent to good schools with suitable learning environment.
4. Government needs to provide some incentives to students during teaching practice just like nurses during hospital experience.
5. The Faculty should find out whether the schools have need for students teachers to avoid the embarrassment of rejection.
6. Lecturers should endeavour to visit the students and supervise the actual teaching process.

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