

Lecturers' Assessment of Teaching Practice Exercise in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

Teaching Practice is a crucial aspect of teacher education. Despite its importance, the programme is confronted with numerous challenges. Consequently, this paper examines the quality of teaching practice in Nigerian Universities from the perspective of education lecturers. Quality of Teaching Practice Questionnaire (QTPQ) was employed in obtaining data from 691 randomly selected education lecturers from the universities across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. The data obtained were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that the respondents rated the quality of teaching practice exercise in Nigerian universities as fairly above average. It was also found that experience and job status had significant influence on the respondents' assessment, while gender had no influence. Among others, it was recommended that more time should be allotted to teaching practice and re-training programmes should be organised for lecturers on the best practice in the internship aspect of teacher education.

Key words: Assessment, Quality, Teaching Practice Exercise, Teacher Education.

1. Introduction

Teacher education is an educational programme that involves a deliberate upbringing of individuals through training in order to acquire knowledge, skills and values and transmit such to others. It is a cyclic affair in which both the content area and pedagogical skills are packaged for the trainees in order to prepare them to meet the requirement of the teaching profession (Jekayinfa, 2000). As part of the package, internship or teaching practice is often earmarked specific period of time during which teachers-in-training are posted to schools to teach, demonstrate in practical terms the knowledge and skills they had acquired during training. It is a replica of the Houseman-ship in Medicine and Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) for the Engineers and Court Attachment for the Lawyers. Teaching practice offers opportunity to student-teachers to learn basic skills of teaching and put their newly acquired knowledge into actual practice. The exercise allows teacher-in-training to get familiar with educational ethics and the rules and regulations governing the practice of education as a professional career. Through this exposure, the ethics, the rules and regulations become internalised by the student-teachers through the process of interaction with the administrative and academic staff as well as the students in their schools of practice (Idowu, 2000).

Teaching practice is an important pre-qualification requirement that affords the teachers-in-training the opportunity to put into practice what they have learnt in theory. It is like the laboratory for practical demonstration. According to Taneja (2000), teaching practice is usually interchanged with such words as practice teaching, field studies, infield experience, and internship, among others. The scope of teaching practice, according to Idowu (2000), is not limited to the cognitive domain; it also covers the affective and psychomotor domains. He further stressed that the responsibilities of student-teachers are not limited to classroom teaching (cognitive domain). They also include the promotion of the psycho-social development and growth of their pupils. Experience has shown that this very crucial aspect of teacher education is being confronted with many challenges which have given various stakeholders a lot of concern. For instance, Idowu (2000) observed that the programme is beset with a multiplicity of problems and difficulties confronting student-teachers, cooperating teachers as well as the co-operating schools and the supervisors. He stressed that most of the problems are not resolved even at the end of the exercise. Some of the problems identified include psychological makeup of the trainees, pedagogical preparations, classroom adaptation, and mode and means of assessment. There seems to be a

controversy among the stakeholders as to what is to be done to revitalise the scheme for the general good of the beneficiaries of education enterprise.

Students are the direct beneficiaries of any educational programme put in place in any community; they can also be the most disadvantaged for one reason or the other. According to Gujjai (2009), practice teaching is of crucial importance in any teacher education programme as it is a culminating experience in teacher preparation. On the importance of teaching practice in teacher education scheme, Furlong, Hirst and Pocklington (1988), noted that it affords the teacher-in-training unique opportunity to internalise certain social behaviour that is inherent in the noble profession. It can also serve predictive purposes, especially, concerning the actual performance of the trainees when finally engaged as permanent staff. Furthermore, Gujjar (2009) identified with the views of Trowbridge and Bybee (1990) on the potential of teaching practice to make student-teachers feel fulfilled, grow in experience and internalise the enviable culture of teaching, while they are engaged in productive challenges.

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), the mandate of all Faculties of Education is summed up as follows:

- i. Production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the education system;
- ii. Encouraging further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- iii. Help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national objectives;
- iv. 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, and
- v. Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (p.24).

To facilitate the realization of the laudable mandate, the Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) for all Faculties of Education was developed in 1989. The import of this is to set parameters that would lead to the attainment of the desired goals. The MAS is still in use, while the recent attempt to review and improve on it remains on the drawing board.

Currently in Nigerian universities, teaching practice is a compulsory course in the Faculties of Education and it attracts 2 or 4 credit load, depending on the nature of the programme being offered by the students. Teaching practice duration is usually between four and six weeks which begins in the third and fourth year as teaching practice (i) and (ii) respectively of studentship as undergraduate. Students are usually required to practice in their schools of choice and teach based on their areas of specialisation. Although, teaching practice is expected to expose student-teachers to all school programmes, emphasis is laid on classroom practice during which they are supervised by lecturers and given instant feedback. The supervision is usually twice during each of the exercise. The students' performance is determined by finding the means of assessors' grades. The external examiner conducts a random assessment of students on teaching practice and moderate internal assessors' grades.

Various educationists and educators such as Yahaya (2000), and Yusuf and Ajidagba (2010) have commented on the quality of teaching practice. This may be due to the calibre of teachers that are being produced. To some, teaching practice as being currently run is considered as inadequate, while others did not see anything wrong in the way it is organised.

The divergence in the views might be due to a number of factors, among which are gender, job status and years of experience of lecturers. Studies such as Omosewo (2000) and Yusuf and Ajidagba(2010) have shown that the way and manner in which a person assesses a programme may be influenced by a number of variables. However, Omosewo (2004) noted that gender did not mediate in the assessment of individuals. In a study conducted by Yusuf (2010), it was found that gender did not affect the way male and female lecturers assessed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) retraining programme of the National Teachers Institute.

Studies showed that job status and experience greatly influenced the way a person carries out assessment. For instance, Jekayinfa (2000), Omosewo (2000), and Yahaya (2000) conducted studies which concluded that job status and experience influenced assessment made by individuals. This may be due to the fact that people with long years of teaching experience and higher job status are more careful and

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Several studies (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003; Marais & Meir, 2004, and Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009) have been conducted on student-teachers experiences during teaching practice, but a review of the literature indicate that there are limited studies that have been conducted on education lecturers' assessment of the quality of teaching practice. In view of this, there is the need to examine the quality of teaching practice as viewed by lecturers in the Faculties of Education as they are crucial stakeholders in the sector. An understanding of lecturers' views would facilitate awareness of the challenges facing the programme which could militate against a positive teaching practice exercise.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the statement of the problem and the reviewed literature, the following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the quality of the internship aspect of teacher education as assessed by education lecturers in Nigeria?
2. Do gender, job status and job experience influence education lecturers' assessment of quality of teaching practice?

1.4 Research Hypotheses:

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant difference in male and female education lecturers' assessment of quality of teaching practice in Nigerian universities.
2. There is no significant difference in education lecturers' assessment of quality of teaching practice in Nigerian universities based on job status (junior and senior).
3. There is no significant difference in education lecturers' assessment of quality of teaching practice in Nigerian universities based on job experience (year of service).

2. Methodology

The study employed descriptive research of the survey type. The design is one of the most appropriate methods of obtaining factual, attitudinal or behavioural information from selected samples (David & Sutton, 2004). Since the study sought to examine the quality of the teaching practice aspect of teacher education as perceived by education lecturers, which is a kind of self-report, a survey design was considered appropriate.

2.1 Participant and Setting

The population of the study comprised all lecturers in the Faculties of Education in the Federal and State universities in Nigeria. The target population consisted of lecturers in the Faculties of Education in six Federal and six State universities across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. A total of 700 copies of the designed questionnaire were distributed to lecturers across the purposively selected universities. In all, only 691 fully completed copies of the questionnaire were obtained from the respondents and, consequently, 691 respondents participated in the study. The 691 gives an average of 98.7% which was considered adequate for a study of this nature. The number comprised 527 males and 164 females, while their ages ranged from 24 -64 years.

2.3 Instrumentation

A questionnaire titled Teaching Practice Assessment Questionnaire was developed and adopted for the study. It has two parts, Part 1 contained items on demographic data of the respondents, while Part 11 contained 20 items on the quality of the teaching practice aspect of teacher education. The instrument was validated by three lecturers in the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was established through a test-retest procedure. A correlation coefficient of .75 was obtained, showing the reliability level of the instrument. The questionnaire is a four-point modified Likert Type Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire forms were administered to the respondents through the assistance of the Faculty of Education officers of the selected universities. The completed forms were retrieved and scored as: Strongly Agree (4); Agree (3); Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). In scoring the instrument, the researchers used four point

Likert-type rating scale. Since there are 20 items altogether in the instrument, the lowest total score obtainable is 20, while the highest total score obtainable is 80. Therefore, to score the instrument, the researchers categorised quality of teaching practice into two viz. Good and poor qualities, with the score range for the two categories being 50 – 80 for good and 20 – 49 for poor respectively. The adoption of this classification is informed by the realisation that teaching quality as a phenomenon is a time variable occurrence. The adoption of categorisation is therefore meant to reflect the variable nature of the phenomenon.

3. Results

The analysis of the data obtained was done with the use of SPSS computer software. Demographic data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using t- test. ANOVA was used to test hypothesis three.

3.2 Main Research Question:

What is the quality of the internship aspect of teacher education as assessed by education lecturers in Nigeria?

The analysis showed that the total mean score of the respondents on all the items was fairly above the average mean of 40. In other words, the respondents assessed the quality of the teaching practice exercise as fair (see Table 1).

3.3 Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the assessment of male and female education lecturers on the quality of teaching practice.

The result indicated the t-test value as 1.68 and the Sig (2-tailed) as .094, since the $p > .05$. The hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the assessment of male and female education lecturers on the quality of teaching practice is accepted. This means that male and female lecturers are not significantly different in their assessment of the quality of teaching practice exercise (see Table 2).

3.4 Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant difference in the assessment of education lecturers on the quality of teaching practice based on job status.

The analysed data showed that a t-test value of 3.255 with a Sig (2-tailed) value of .001. Since the $p < .05$ the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the assessment of education lecturers on the quality of teaching practice based on job status is rejected. This implication is that the assessment of junior and senior lecturers of the quality of teaching practice is different from one another (See Table 3).

3.5 Hypothesis Three:

There is no significant difference in the assessment of education lecturers on the quality of teaching practice based on teaching experience.

The results indicated an F-value of 4.567 and a Sig (2-tailed) of .011 at 0.05 alpha level. Since the $p < .05$, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the assessment of education lecturers on the quality of teaching practice based on teaching experience is rejected. Therefore, the respondents differ in their assessment of the quality of teaching practice (see Table 4).

4. Discussions

Research question 1 is on the quality of the internship aspect of teacher education as assessed by education lecturers in Nigeria. The analysis showed that the total mean score of the respondents on all the items was fairly above the average mean of 40. In other words, the respondents had assessed the quality of

the teaching practice as fair.

Hypothesis one states that there is no significant difference in the assessment of lecturers on the quality of teaching practice based on gender. It was found, from the result of data analysis that the lecturers are similar in their assessment. This is in line with the observation made by Idowu (2000) that lecturers are objective in the worldview especially on the issue bordering on education, teaching and learning. This is possibly as a result of their orientation and exposure, since teaching practice supervision is usually carried out without bias for gender.

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the assessment of the quality of teaching practice on the basis of job status. For the purpose of this study, lecturers were categorised into two, junior and senior. The result obtained from data analysis revealed that there was a significant difference. This implies that there is a significant difference in the assessment of lecturers about the quality of teaching practice in the Nigerian universities. The difference could be due to the fact that the junior lecturers might not possess the same level of skills as regards assessment compared to their senior colleagues. The finding of this study is consistent with the finding of Yusuf (2010) that lecturers' assessment of the student- teachers was based on their occupational status, orientation. The finding of this study appears to be in contrast with the submission of Jekayinfa (2000) that lecturers, irrespective of their occupational status, have the same orientation, and by extension, similar disposition to matters bordering on teaching and learning.

The third hypothesis states that significant difference does not exist between lecturers of varying job experience as regards assessment of the quality of teaching practice. Because of the long period of service associated with university career, lecturers in this study were stratified into three strata. These are those who have been in the service for between 1 and 10 years; those that have been in service for between 11 and 20 years, and those have been on the job for more than 21 years. Based on data analysis, the hypothesis was rejected. The finding of this study is in line with the conclusion reached by Ngidi & Sibaya (2003) who noted that lecturers whose years of teaching experience is long were meticulous in their method than less experience teachers. The finding is also in agreement with Marais & Meir (2004) and Kiggundu & Nayimuli (2009) who concluded that experience, job status and age had determining influence on their ways of assessment of student teacher during their internship.

The implication of this is that lecturers across the Nigerian universities with varying length of service differ in their assessment of the quality of teaching practice. Experience is much talked about as the best teacher. Thus, it is not surprising that significant difference exists in the perception of lecturers about the quality of teaching practice on the basis of their job experience. In the academic circle, job experience, and promotion are interrelated. Therefore, it is not unlikely that lecturers of different length of service would have acquired occupational experience of varying degrees which would influence their assessment.

5. Conclusions

It is clear from the findings of this study that lecturers in the faculties of education across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria, irrespective of gender, are similar in their assessment of the quality of teaching practice. This implies that irrespective of their gender similarly assess the quality of teaching practice. Also, the education lecturers appear to differ significantly in their perception of the quality of teaching practice on the basis of job status. This is due possibly to the difference in their occupational cadre. The senior lecturers are usually more involved in administrative duties than their junior colleagues which afford them good opportunity to interact with students of diverse academic and socio-cultural background. They are also usually invited to be involved in external examinations by sister universities and this provides avenue for acquisition of career experience. In contrast, junior lecturers do not have this kind of opportunity as they are most times confined to the academic world of their institutions due largely to their low status. Therefore, the difference in their assessment could be premised on their job status.

The lecturers drawn from the universities in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria are not significantly different in their assessment of the quality of teaching practice on the basis of job experience. This essentially is a manifestation of their levels of career maturity and mobility acquired over the years. It is clear from the finding of this study that lecturers at different levels of career experience perceive students' involvement and performance in teaching practice differently. This, to some extent, underlines the assumption that an individual's world view is influenced by his life experiences, career and social. Expectedly, people, especially, lecturers learn to view the world around them more dispassionate as a result

of life or career experience. Thus, the difference manifested by lecturers that were sampled for this study must have been influenced by their exposure to different students they had met, taught and assessed at one time or the other in their working life.

6. Recommendations

Education is fundamentally a human capital, and the teacher is one of the most important human factors in the school system. The quality of teacher, to a great extent, determines the success of the school system. Thus, the findings of this study, that the low quality of teaching has a number of implications for the teaching profession. In this wise, the following recommendations are made

1. University authorities should allocate more resources to teaching practice to enhance students' dedication and adequate supervision by lecturers. If this is done, it will improve the quality of the education graduates for the overall advancement of the teaching profession and, by extension, the collective interest of the nation.

2. The lecturers in the Faculties of Education must be assigned fewer students to supervise in order to enhance quality assurance. For instance, the number of student-teachers assigned to a supervisor should be to a manageable size to ensure thorough supervision. In practical terms, a maximum of eight student-teachers to a supervisor is recommended.

3. The duration of teaching practice should be extended to provide the teacher-trainees enough time to master the art of teaching in the practical setting of the school. This would also enable the supervisors an ample time for practical assessment of the student-teachers and would engender high quality teaching practice experience.

4. The teaching subject assigned to each teacher-trainee must be within his field of study to ensure adequate and quality teaching practice experience. Essentially, student-teachers should be allowed to teach subjects in which they are innately endowed in order to facilitate meaningful learning on the part of the students.

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Tables

Table 1: Respondents' Assessment of the Quality of Teaching Practice Exercise

No. of Respondents	Mean	Std. Deviation
691	43.06	6.77

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviation and t-test of the Respondents' Assessment of Teaching Practice Exercise Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-test	Sig. (2 tailed)
Male	515	42.80	6.61	689	-1.679	.094
Female	176	43.79	7.19			

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviation and t-test on Respondents' Assessment of Teaching Practice Exercise Based on Job Status

Job Status	N	Mean	SD	df	t-test	Sig. (2-tailed)
Junior	462	43.64	6.93	689	3.26	.001
Senior	229	41.87	6.30			

Table 4: ANOVA Comparing Respondents' Assessment of Quality of Teaching Practice Exercise Based on Job experience

Job Experience	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Between Groups	414.788	2	207.394	4.567	.011
Within Groups	31246.011	688	45.416		
Total	31660.799	690			

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