Challenges of Student-Teachers during Teaching Practice in Nigeria

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Abstract
The standard of education in Nigeria is rapidly depreciating or falling and these can be traced to poor and lackadaisical attitude of supervisors of student-teachers. The purpose of the supervision are to acquaint they would be teachers with the necessary skills needed in teaching profession. The aims of this work were to find out the challenges which student-teachers encountered during teaching practice in Nigeria. The study investigated the importance of teaching practices exercise in Nigeria. The challenges faced by student-teachers during teaching practice exercise includes the practicing teachers are perceived as persons who are only in the school to pass a test, non remuneration of student-teachers by the government and the teacher not having time of his own outside the classroom. These paper proffered solutions to problems identified. The paper made suggestions that addressed the challenges that affect the student-teachers performance during teaching practice.

Keywords: Education, Teaching Practice, Teaching and Learning

Introduction
Teaching according to Hornsby (2000) is the work of a teacher, or ideas of a particular person or group, especially about politics, religion or society that are taught to other people. Teaching refers to various activities undertaken by more knowledgeable individuals in other to enable others learn (Onwuka, 1981). Davidson (2005) teaching practice is a system where teachers in training are exposed to a systematic exposure to the actual classroom experience. In teaching practice, one has to know when to display the skills, knowledge and intellect in the classroom environment. 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 practice 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 practice 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

Teaching practice

Teaching practice exercise is an interesting programme or activity in which teacher education institutions send students-teachers to various secondary and primary schools under
supervision every year. Teaching practice has been defined by various scholars from different perspectives. According to Davidson (2005), teaching practice can be defined as the system by which teachers in training are subjected to a systematic exposure to actual classroom situation. In the same vein, Haines (1960) defined teaching practice as “the period of time during which a pre-service teacher is assigned to a public school for supervised teaching experience as a part of his college programme”. Eze (2003) opined that “teaching practice is first opportunity for the student-teacher to participate in activities involved in teaching in actual situation”. He also asserted that teaching practice is designed to provide opportunity and guidance in a school setting for the student-teacher in practice to develop professional competences, personal characteristics, understanding, knowledge and skills of a teacher. When the teachers who have been in the teaching field understand their responsibility to the trainees, the trainee-teachers will acquire appropriate skills based on their practical experiences.

**Important of Teaching Practice**

The overall goal of teacher education is to prepare teachers to take active part in teaching; this mainly is done by equipping them with necessary knowledge, attitude, skills which will enable them to adapt to different situations in the profession. This will enable prospective teachers to contribute immensely to the teaching profession. Okorie (1979) opined that “knowledge is of little value in itself unless the person who possesses it can make it serve him well by knowing how to apply it to solution of specific problems which confronts him or the society in which he lives.” Any knowledge acquired by individuals without practical is of little value. It is like a faith without good work. Davidson (2005) outlined some essential features of which can serve the purpose of teaching practice.

They are as follows:

1. Acquisition of relevant theoretical knowledge.
2. It is supervised exercise.
3. Constancy and regularity on the student-teacher part.
4. Comprehensive

**Challenges Facing Student-Teacher during Teaching Practice**

Apart from the challenges of mastering the subject well, there are other challenges which the student-teachers encounter during the period of teaching practice. According to Davidson (2005) in many teaching practice situations, the practicing teachers are perceived as persons who are only in the school to pass a test in practice situations, the practicing teachers are perceived as persons who are only in the school to pass a test in practice teaching and no more.

Okorie (1979) summarized teaching practice challenges with regard to student-teachers as follows:

1. Outside the classroom, the teachers time is not always his own.
2. Teaching affords the student-teachers varied and interesting opportunities to use his intellectual and creative leadership qualities.
3. At times, a teacher must live in the community in which he works. In most cases, he may find the place deficient in cultural, social, housing and transportation facilities.
iv. It is possible that in some communities, the members may attempt to encroach on the teacher’s personal preferences.

Adeyanju (1978), through his own findings concluded that some co-operative schools will not provide enough facilities required for successful practice teaching experience. These findings point to what we see in many schools today. According to Ngada (1992), inadequate funding of teaching practice programme in terms of supervisor’s allowances can affect their level of supervision with regards supervision exercise. He also identified lack of allowance giving to student-teachers to help them in acquiring materials or for transporting them to their various stations for the exercise. Okorie (1979) observed that some student-teachers may react negatively to the presence of their supervisors and make mistakes. They may be overtaken by anxiety.

**Effects of those Challenges**

The effect of those challenges has been great constrain to the student-teacher in the implementation of their knowledge and intellectual abilities during teaching practice.

Okorie (1979) explained that lack of student-teachers interest foster poor attitude on the part of the student. Some student-teachers show very little interest as a result of incompetence.

Ngada (2001) observed that in many cases lecturers either sample students who were not to carry out “on campus teaching practice” (OCTP) or simply evaluate lesson notes and assign grades. These problems are gradually affecting even the educational manpower in the way they implement their delegated role. Ngada (2001), observed that student look up to teaching practice as a period for relaxation after a busy term in the classroom and laboratory. Since many student-teachers use the period of teaching practice as a period of rest, you will find out that objectives of the exercise cannot be attained maximally. As a matter of fact, lack of allowances to the supervisors and student-teachers would affect the level of their performance especially the student-teachers. All these affect the level performance in teaching practice.

The problems of accommodation can always affect the comfort of the student-teachers and the permanent staff. Mkpa (1987), identified fear which imposes a great effect on the student-teacher’s suddenly visited by the supervisor for supervision when the student-teacher is not expecting him, denying the student-teacher the chance to repeat his/her teaching performance was poor, the possibility of the supervisor asking questions to the dull students etc. if eventually, they entertain fear, it may be difficult for them to perform well during supervision. Furthermore, Okorie (1979), not many school buildings are ideal or even up to date and at times, the teacher is assigned to large classes with inadequate equipment and facilities. The problems of accommodation can always affect the comfort of the student-teachers and the permanent staff.

**Suggested Solution to the Challenges**

According to Eze (2003) “the chairman/coordinator or the organizing committee of the teaching practice exercise must ensure that provisions for effective communication and information-flow are made.” The actualization of practical teaching depends ultimately on the teaching practice committee that is organizing the program. According to Oghubu (2000), some ways of promoting the contribution of secondary school personnel towards the achievement of the objectives of teaching practice are:-

Increase the duration of teaching practice and practical teaching to at least one or two terms; organize workshop on teaching practice before sending students to school. Principals should
provide hostel, and office accommodations to the student-teachers, government should pay teaching practice allowances for the up-keep of student-teachers and for supervision by lecturers. According to Anebe and Enem (2006), the supervisors should assist the student-teachers to develop confidence in them and in their supervisors. In addition, continuous evaluation of the student teachers will also help to achieve the objective of teaching practice. Ngada (2001) suggested that measures should be taken by the college on student truancy, lack of adequate lesson plan, and effective actualization of teacher’s aids. According to Ocho (1991) the ways to prevent these problems during teaching practice include:

1. Orientation for teachers practice supervisors
2. Orientation and monitoring of co-operating teachers
3. Orientation for students
4. Provision of incentives for supervisors and co-operating teachers

The sanitization of supervisors, student-teachers and co-operating teachers is very essential in defining their roles. Eresimadu (1987) suggested that principal should co-operate with teaching practice - coordinators: the principal from the co-operating school has a very significant role to play. In the light of the foregoing, this paper made the following suggestions as remedies to the problems:

1. Adequate orientation, seminars, workshops should be organized for both student-teacher and supervisors.
2. Teaching facilities should be provided for the student(such as current textbooks, etc)
3. Co-operation of school principals and permanent teachers to help student-teachers in their areas of difficulties
4. The government should pay student-teachers allowances for their up keep.
5. Persistent evaluation should be encouraged for student-teachers

Conclusion
Teaching practice has some positive and negative side effects which impose a great deal of challenges on supervisors, student-teachers, college administrators and educational management in general. However some recommendations have been made to solve the problems. According Enebe and Enem (2006), teaching practice exercise should take place in an environment where the student teachers are comfortable by way of accommodation and teaching resources. The provision of good accommodation and orientation exercise for staff and student-teachers are for student-teachers to excel.

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