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Challenges of Teaching Practice Programme as Perceived by Student Teachers of Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

Teaching practice programme is designed to smooth the transition from studentship to professional teaching. It is one of the most important components of the teacher training programmes. It provides an opportunity for student teachers to put their theoretical studies into practice. However, teaching practice as an educational exercise may not have been without challenges, which this paper is aimed to ascertain. The study had a total of 218 final year education students of the University of Calabar, and the Cross River State University of Technology (CRUTECH) as the respondents. Four research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

Data for the study were collected with the use of a structured questionnaire. Research question were analyzed using mean and standard deviation statistics, while the hypotheses were analyzed using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. It was revealed among others that student teachers of these universities perceived school placement as a challenge to them. The study further revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female student teachers of university of Calabar and CRUTECH on the challenges of teaching practice in Calabar. Based on these, it was recommended among others, that government of Nigeria should increase the fund allocations to the universities while teaching practice supervisors need to create enabling atmosphere to enhance cordial relationship between them and student-teachers for effective performance.

Keywords: Challenges, Teaching Practice Programme student teachers.

Introduction

Teaching practice as a crucial component of teacher education is known to expose student teachers to the actual practice of teaching. No educational programme is said to be complete without an effective teaching practice programme that student teachers are given the opportunity to try their ability in teaching before getting into the real world of teaching profession. Perry (2004) in Abongdia, Adu and Foncha (2015) argued that teaching practice creates a mixture of anticipation, anxiety, excitement and apprehension in the student teachers as they commence their teaching practice. Teaching practice has been defined by many scholars from different perspectives. Davison in Onyebulawa (2017) defined teaching practice as a system whereby teachers in training are exposed to a systematic exposure to the actual classrooms experience. 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 teaching practice exercise is to help the student teachers to bridge the gap between theory and practice of teaching and learning and by so doing the student-teachers acquire the skill of diagnosis and analysis of educational environment. During the teaching practice, the intern may be asked to reflect upon the teaching, offer insights and suggest next steps in the instruction.

After this period of observation, usually measured in a few weeks, the student teachers begin to assume teaching responsibilities. According to Osuala in Okoro (2016), teaching practice exposes trainees teacher to the realities of effective teaching and helps them to try out methods of teaching and gain practical classroom experience under expected supervision. The importance of teaching practice in teacher education cannot be overemphasized. Teaching practice is considered to be one of the most influential aspects of pre-service teacher education.

The National Universities Commission (2007) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education Benchmark, (2015) came out with the following objectives as to why teaching practice is a mandatory component of teaching training:

- i. To provide the forum for student teacher to real life, class room experiences under the supervision of professional teachers.
- ii. To provide the forum for student teachers to translate educational theories and principles into practice.
- iii. To enable student teachers discover their own strengths and weaknesses in classroom teaching, provide opportunities to enable them address their weaknesses and enrich their strengths.
- iv. To provide student-teachers with an opportunity for further acquisition of professional skills, competencies, personal characteristics and experience for full time teaching.

Teaching practice is not a bed of rosary as there are basically certain challenges encountered by the student-teachers. Over the years, there are repeated complaints arising from observation made over the performance and behavior of the student-teachers by their supervisor and the cooperating teacher trainees and the pupils alike. These challenges no doubt, have been in one way or the other hindering the effectiveness of the student-teachers. This paper is an attempt to highlight the challenges of teaching practice exercise as perceived by the student-teachers in Nigerian Universities.

Statement of Problem

Teaching practice can be said to be a double functional exercise within the field to acquire some practical experience in order to sharpen the student-teacher up for the profession and to evaluate student teachers in terms of the quality of professional learning that has taken place in them. Student teachers undergoing teaching practice tend to regard it as an essentially evaluative programme, almost forgetting that they are also meant to exercise themselves on the field. They are therefore mainly concerned and interested in the evaluation (grade) aspect. Hence the tendency to put up a good performance in the presence of the supervisor, they display and usage of teaching aid, chalkboard, diagrams and sketches in a bid to obtain good grades while reverse is almost the case when not under supervision.

In recent time there has been public outcry over poor standard of student performance in school subjects, some students exhibit delinquent behaviors during class instruction. The said problems are suspects of the student teachers personal challenges such as inadequate knowledge of the subject matter, poor classroom management/discipline and those of external factors like pupils, principals, school supervisor etc. this paper is therefore designed to determine the challenges of teaching practice programme as perceived by student-teachers of Nigerian Universities.

Purpose of Study

The major purpose of the study is to determine the challenges of teaching practice as perceived by the student teachers in Nigerian Universities.

Specifically, the study ascertained:

1. The challenges of school placement as perceived by student teachers in Nigerian Universities.
2. Classroom management challenges as perceived by student teachers.
3. The challenges of duration of teaching practice exercises.
4. Supervisory/mentorship challenges as perceived by student teachers in Nigerian Universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the perceptions of student teachers of the challenges of classroom management in Calabar?
2. How do the student teachers perceive school placement for teaching practice in Calabar?
3. What are the student teachers perceptions of teaching practice duration challenges in Calabar?
4. How do the student teachers perceive teaching supervisory and mentorship in Calabar?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female students teachers on the challenges of teaching practice in Calabar.

Significance of the Study

The findings of these study would be of great benefit to the education authorities, researchers and education students as it would identify challenges of teaching practice programme.

The researchers would benefit by using the result as sources of literature for future researches. Education authorities would benefit as it would help them to plan well for the teaching practice for student teachers. And the potential student teachers will use the findings to get themselves well prepared to cope with the challenges as they go for teaching practice as the result of the study would provide possible suggestions on how they would effectively remedy the challenges. It is hoped therefore that this study would act as a guideline towards the achieving the objectives of teaching practice programme.

Review of the Literature

Teaching practice exercise is a component of school programme hence, thought provoking. It helps in preparing student teachers in developing their potentials. Teaching and learning exercise could be disrupted by a range of challenges ranging from geographical distance low and uneven levels of teachers expertise, lack of resources, lack of discipline among the learners and the educators. According to Quick and Sieborger, (2005), the challenges encountered by students teachers may affect their performance during teaching practice as well as their perception of teaching profession.

Griofa and Ruairé in Abongdia, Adu and Foncha (2015) observed that school placement of student teachers poses a challenge among the student teachers. Most student teachers do not like their placement abinitio probably because of distance or environmental reasons. This definitely affects their performances.

Another area of challenges is the teaching practice duration. In as much as school placement might be a problem to some student teachers, it is likely that the duration for the exercise might be a challenge to them too.

The National University Commission (NUC) in collaboration with the management of universities determines the duration of teaching practice of the Faculty of Education in different Universities. This means that student teachers are required to be in the school of placement for the entire duration of teaching practice. Currently, student teachers are required to spent a whole semester for the exercise. For the fact that some of the student teachers are on part-time programme, some in open and distance learning institutions, may not find it conducive to relate well to this requirement. Some of them who might be on full-time working face the challenges of taking leave from their place of work to take care of the teaching practice duration.

Those likely to face the challenges of teaching practice duration are those who might have GSS Courses to electives in other faculties that would be having lectures during the periods of teaching practice because they need to attend the class to pass the examination.

Student teachers may likely face challenges of supervision process during the teaching practice. Teaching practice supervision aims to promote effectiveness among students teacher in class development of pedagogic skills among the students teachers.

The teaching practice supervision is usually lecturers of education who are constantly tyrannized to ensure that they are in line with current trends in the curriculum as well as program and module requirements. Some student's teachers are likely to face supervisory phobia and anxiety which is a serious challenge as some might not be able to cope with. The supervisors have the duty to remedy these challenges as they are to give student teachers written and oral feedbacks, command their improvement, short comings are highlighted and suggestion made on how to overcome the anxiety. As Kigundu and Nayimuli, (2009) noted, school based mentors also observe the student-teachers progress, behavior and attitude at school, and access their practical teaching and learning activities based on the specific guidelines. All these cause the student teachers fear and may lead to lack of cordial relationship between them and supervisor, and would create a great anxiety in them that may in turn affect their performances.

In another development, resources from a vital aspect of effective teaching and learning. The absence of resource could hamper the attainment of educational objectives/goals. Maris and Meier, (2004) noted that in the absence of resources or lack therefore, students get frustrated and this can make their teaching practice a difficult task. According to them, this is challenging for student teachers as it draws on issue of classroom management and control together with learners discipline. The role of resources in teaching and learning effectiveness cannot be overstressed. Ndirika (2012), in his study, noted that teachers would very easily give up on their enthusiasm to effectively teach practical aspect of the science syllabus if the needed equipment are not available.

Methods

The study area for the research is the University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology, all in Calabar, Cross River State of Nigeria.

Survey research design was adopted for the study since it sorts to determine the opinions of the respondent of the study. A total of 218 final year students of the two Universities in Cross River State formed the population for the study. This level of student had participated in the teaching practice exercises in their institutions. The entire final year students of the Universities were used because the population size were manageable. Hence no sample was adopted.

A well structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to validation done by the experts in measurement and evaluation drawn from the two institutions under study and was consequently used for the collection of data with the help of two research assistants. To ensure that the instrument was capable of measuring what it was meant to measure correctly, a reliability test was carried out using Croubach Alpha reliability test with the result of 0.78 reliability coefficients. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and t-test analysis at 0.05 level of significance for the hypotheses.

Results and Discussion

Research Question I

How do the student teachers perceive the placement of schools for teaching practice in Calabar?

Table 1 Mean response of student teachers on their perceptions of school placement for teaching practice in Calabar (N=218).

S/N	Item Statement	X	SD	Dec
1	Student teachers are not allowed to choose their placement.	3.76	0.54	Agreed
2	School distance make student teachers to report late to school.	3.81	0.48	Agreed
3	A lot of money spent on transport because of the distance of school.	3.15	0.78	Agreed
4	Placement in primary schools is a problem for student teachers who do not know what to teach in the school due to their field of study.	3.71	0.56	Agreed
5	Student teachers find it difficult to cope in schools that operate shifts	3.21	0.64	Agreed
6	Because of school distance student teachers spent rent money on accommodation	3.63	0.74	Agreed

Note: X= Mean score of respondents; SD= Standard Deviation score of respondents; Dec= Decision.

Table above showed that all the respondents perceived the school placement as a challenge to the student teachers in Calabar. All the items had their Means ranged from 3.15 to 3.18 which was above the cut off 2.50. a cluster mean of 3.12 indicate positive perception of respondents on the item statements listed in the cluster. While Standard Deviation (SD) ranged from 0.48-0.78 indicated less variability in the opinion of the student teachers.

Research Question II

What are perceptions of student teachers of the challenges of classroom management in Calabar?

Table 2

S/N	Item Statement	X	SD	Dec
1	It is difficult to control the class as a result of overcrowded class.	3.01	0.86	Agreed
2	Poor sitting arrangement is a big challenge to student teachers.	2.87	0.38	Agreed
3	It is cumbersome to control learner's noise in the class.	2.93	0.88	Agreed
4	Difficult to manage large size of classes.	2.78	0.96	Agreed
5	Disrespect of student teachers by the students.	3.06	0.84	Agreed
6	Lack of power by student teachers to exert authority on indiscipline behavior of students in class.	2.89	0.90	Agreed
7	Student teachers are seen as visitors by the students and as such they do not obey rules and regulations of the school	2.96	0.92	Agreed

Note: X= Mean score of respondents; SD= Standard Deviation score of respondents; Dec= Decision.

The result in table 2 showed that the respondent agreed in all the item statements with mean scores ranged from 2.78-3.06 which was above the cutoff of 2.50. This was an indication that the respondents showed positive perceptions on the items listed on the table with a mean cluster of 2.93. While Standard Deviation (SD) ranged from 0.83-0.96 indicated less variable in the opinions of the student teachers.

Research Question III

What are the student teachers perception of teaching practice duration in Calabar?

Table 3 Mean response s of male and female student teachers perceptions of teaching practice in Calabar.

S/N	Item Statement	X	SD	Dec
1	One whole semester for the teaching practice duration is too much.	3.06	0.90	Agreed
2	The teaching practice duration is detrimental to student teachers economy.	2.78	0.64	Agreed
3	The duration is favorable to student teachers	2.37	1.85	Agreed
4	The teaching practice duration helps the student teachers to become used to practical teaching.	2.42	1.05	Agreed
5	The long duration is too expensive for the student teachers.	2.42	1.05	Agreed
6	The long duration is determined to our elective lectures.	3.14	1.08	Agreed
7	The duration subjects student's teachers to carrying over semester courses causing over load in the next semester.	2.88	0.82	Agreed
8	It causes illness among student teachers after examinations in the practicing schools.	3.09	0.98	Agreed

Note: X= Mean score of respondents; SD= Standard Deviation score of respondents; Dec= Decision.

The result in above table showed that the respondents agreed with all items except items 3 and 4 without scores of 2.37 and 2.42 were lower that the cutoff of 2.50. While other item statements were in the affirmative with scores ranged from 2.78 to 3.09 which were all above the cutoff of 2.50. This is an indication that the respondents showed positive perception on all except items statements of 3 and 4.

However the mean cluster is 2.88 showing positive response by the majority student teachers in their perceptions on the teaching practice duration. While Standard Deviation (SD) ranged from 0.64 to 2.85 showing less variability in the opinion of the student teachers.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female student teachers on their perception of supervision of teaching practice in Calabar.

Table 4 T-test analysis of male and female student teachers perception of supervision of teaching practice in Calabar.

	N	X	SD	t.cal	t.tab	Dec
Male student teachers	102	2.93	0.88	1.26	1.95	Accepted
Female student teachers	116	3.21	0.78			

N=118 (n¹ male student teacher = 102, n² female student teachers = 116)

The result on the above table showed that t-cal (1.26) is less than the t-tab (1.95) which means that the hypothesis of no significance is accepted. In other words, there is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female student's teachers on their perceptions of supervision of teaching practice in Calabar.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significance difference in the mean response of male and female student teachers on their perceptions of challenges of teaching practice in Calabar.

Table 5 T-test analysis of male and female student teachers on their perceptions of challenges of teaching practice in Calabar.

	N	X	SD	t.cal	t.tab	Dec
Male student teachers	102	2.87	0.83	1.76	1.94	Accepted
Female student teachers	116	2.98	1.08			

N=281 (n¹ male student teachers = 102, n² female students teachers = 116)

The result in table 5 above showed that the t-cal (1.76) is less than the t-tab (1.94) which indicates that the hypothesis of no significance is accepted. Hence there is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female student teachers on their perception of challenges of teaching practice in Calabar.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that student teachers do not enjoy their placement. School placement is not favorable to them as they perceived that it is too expensive to pay for accommodation and transportation lateness to school due to long distance, it was also revealed that they are usually not given subject to teach according to their field of specialization, they find it difficult to cope with schools that operate shift system. This finding is in agreement with Griofa and Ruairé in Aboughdia, Adua and Foncha (2015) who observed that school placement of student teachers creates numerous challenges for the student teachers. This definitely affects the effectiveness of student teachers making them less productive. Also the study revealed that all the students' teachers agreed with all the listed item statements as challenges of classroom management during the teaching practice in Calabar. This ranged from the difficulty in classroom control, poor sitting arrangement, lack of resources to match with the disrespect of student teachers by the learners as well as learners stubbornness lack of power by student teachers to exert authority on the learners. This finding is in line with Marais and Meier (2004) who noted that in the absence of resources or lack thereof, student teachers get frustrated and this can make their teaching practice a difficult task and it draws on issues of classroom management and control together with learners discipline. Ndirika (2012) also stated that teachers would very easily give up on their enthusiasm to effectively teach practical aspect of the science syllabus if the needed equipments are not available.

Furthermore, they study found out that the teaching practice duration is not convenient to the student teachers. All the student teachers agreed that all the item statements in table 3 except item numbers 3 and 4/ pose challenges for them. These ranged from spending the whole semester in the practicing school, missing their elective courses, making them to carry over elective courses as they could not attend the classes during the teaching practice. This finding is in agreement with that of Mornow (2007) who stated that student teachers who might be on full-time working would face the challenges of taking leave from their place of work to take care of the period of teaching practice duration.

However, the study revealed that some of the student teachers agreed that the long duration of the practice make them to acquire the teaching skills and become used to them. This is in line with Bilesanmi-Awoderu (2017), who noted that teaching practice period is a period at which student teachers develop skills in the art of teaching with the tendency of increasing the competencies and confidence of the student teachers.

The study equally found out that student teachers face supervisory challenges due to lack of cordial relationship between the supervisors and the student teachers thereby affecting their performances during the teaching practice supervision. This finding is in tandem with that of Okobia, Augustine and Osagie (2013) who observed that lack of cordial relationship was the major challenges faced by the student teachers.

Conclusion

One can readily believe from the results of the study that student teachers face a lot of challenges during the teaching practice exercise. These challenges range from how to manage the ever crowded classroom, placement of student teachers in their respective practicing schools, teaching practice duration which they perceived as too long and detrimental to their time-table, indiscipline on the part of pupils. However, it is said that a problem identified is a problem solved; a focus on these challenges can lead to an enlightenment of ways and best strategies to tackle them. The student teachers were able to identify their challenges which are a good starting point to their solutions. It was clear that these challenges faced by the student teachers affect their effective teaching in the school of practice, and may not help them to acquire the necessary skills needed to function well as trained teachers in future.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. The school authorities in collaboration with government should fix a suitable period probably during long vacation for teaching practice so as not to interfere with the student teachers lectures/examinations.
2. Adequate classroom accommodation should be provided to ease the challenges of large sized classes.
3. Student teachers should be allowed to choose practicing schools convenient and preferable to them
4. Necessary seminar, conferences and orientation should be organized for student teachers and the supervisors prior to the teaching practice exercise to ensure cordial relationship between supervisors and the student teachers.
5. Provision should be made for certain teaching practice allowance for the supervisors as well as student teachers to subsidize their expenses during the teaching practice.

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