

PROBLEMS CONFRONTING TEACHING PRACTICE STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, BENUE STATE UNIVERSITY, MAKURDI, DURING TEACHING PRACTICE EXERCISE

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Abstract

This study investigated into the problems confronting teaching practice students of the Faculty of Education, Benue State University, Makurdi, during teaching practice exercise. The population for the study comprised of 300 and 400 levels students that took part in the teaching practice preparations and actual participation for the 2017/2018 academic session. A sample of 150 student teachers were used for the study. Data were collected using an instrument titled Problems Confronting Student Teachers during Teaching Practice Questionnaire. The instrument was validated by the staff of Faculty of Education. The research questions were answered using frequency/percentage and mean. The hypotheses were analysed using chi square, statistic, formulated at 0.05 level of significances. It was found that the duration of the teaching practice (T.P.) exercise have significant influence on their performance in the exercise and that the problems confronting student teachers during teaching practice exercise have significant influence on their performance during the exercise. It was recommended that Education lecturers, especially methodology lecturers, should encourage micro-teaching exercises for all prospective teaching practice students.

Introduction

In this 21st century, the importance of Education has been made very apparent and more realizable. This is because it emphasizes skills performance. The content of Educational programmes should therefore reflect the past, present and future in this wave of modernization process (FRN, 2013). To Denga (1988), education is seen as a process by which individual beneficiaries acquire basic knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs to help them become functional members of the society and the wider world. According to Agogo, Ogbeba, Damkor-Ikpa and Agogo (2018:p. 1), education “should emphasize the training of the mind in building valuable concepts, generalizations and the understanding of the world around us”. In a similar way, Uever (2004) had earlier informed that education is a process of preparing people to fit into the complex social structure and to play particular social roles as members of institutional groups. This means that, education is not limited to the classroom alone, but all the experiences one acquires within and outside the classroom. This means that, education involves the teaching of the learners (Capel, 1997), using the most appropriate teaching methods.

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Teaching is an exciting and rewarding activity, but it is a demanding experience too. A professionally trained teacher uses different methods of teaching to be a success in the classroom (Agogo, 2009). This is why all teachers-to-be have to undergo a refresher course during teaching practice, without which no teacher can be referred to as a professional teacher. Afolabi (1999) opined that teaching practice exercise enables the student teachers to get acquainted with the practical knowledge of teaching and learning process. According to Oyekan (2000) in Agogo et al (2018), the objectives of teaching practice include to:

- i. Provide the student teachers with the dynamic social life system of the school as they interact with the learners and staff, use physical facilities within and around the school.
- ii. Enhance the supervisory capacity of the cooperating teachers.
- iii. Provide an avenue for the student teachers and their supervisors to translate theory into practice.
- iv. Develop personal relationship with others, like the administrators, fellow teachers.
- v. Provide an opportunity for self-evaluation and to discover own strengths and weaknesses, among others.

The teaching practice student teachers should acquire basic work ethics like;

- ❖ Good personal appearance.
- ❖ Audible and non-pitched or harsh voice during teaching.
- ❖ Good emotional control and well mannered.
- ❖ Good teaching entering behaviour, which Onwuka (1984) said are basic and essential for better knowledge anchorage, using proper curriculum package.
- ❖ Punctuality to all school activities. There are several terms that are used to mean teaching practice like, practice teaching, students' practical teaching, student teachers' field studies or infield experience for the student teachers. There are certain basic things to be learnt from teaching practice exercise, which Stones and Morris in 1977 as cited in Agogo et al (2018 P.19) include:
 - i. The practicing of teaching skills and the acquisition of the role of a teacher in a real life situation.
 - ii. The whole range of experiences that student teachers go through in the schools.
 - iii. The practical aspects of the course as distinct from theoretical studies in the school.
 - iv. They learn to handle students in practical situations.

These connotations are parts of the problems of teaching practice which the student teachers must try to overcome during the practical experiences.

The school is expected to cooperate with all student teachers. In addition, the cooperating teachers are expected to guide student teachers during class activities and to give them all the professional support they need for their successful teaching. Many of the student teachers may feel jittery as they start teaching.

On the teaching practice duration, Nakpodia (2011) informed that, the period of six weeks is too short as it may not provide the student teachers ample opportunity to effectively gain enough practical experience which the exercise is intended to achieve. He further informed that some of the supervisors do not sit throughout a lesson period during assessment. Some others do not even discuss their vital observations and comments with their student teachers. The two-time opportunity given to supervisors

to visit them are not implemented as most of them visit the student teachers once. It is important to increase the time duration to three months that cover a term-duration in primary and secondary school levels. This will make the student teachers to gain maximally from this practical exercise.

Performance in this study is seen as what the student teachers do to during the exercise to ensure that he translates what he has learnt in these schools effectively. He or she should be able to:

- ❖ Teach the students well during the exercise, that is subject competence.
- ❖ Apply all the best teaching methods for maximum learning to take place.
- ❖ Adhere to all the professional ethics in the class (appearance, voice control, mannerism, emotional control, questioning styles).
- ❖ Access his or her students after teaching.
- ❖ Relate well with the students, fellow teachers as well as the instructional materials.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered.

1. Do the student teachers possess the prerequisite knowledge of the teaching practice exercise?
2. How does the duration of the teaching practice influence the student teachers' performance during the teaching practice teaching exercise?
3. What problems confront the student teachers during teaching practice exercise?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. The duration of the teaching practice exercise has no significant influence on the student teachers' performance in the exercise.
2. The problems confronting student teachers during teaching practice exercise have no significant influence on their performance in the teaching exercise.

Research Method

The design for this study is the descriptive survey design. According to Agogo and Achor (2019), survey design gathers relevant information from the intended respondents from the population. In most cases, it uses questionnaire as its instrument to collect data. The population of the 400 level students for teaching practice exercise is 542 students. The sample size was 150 teaching practice students for 2017/2018 academic session.

The instrument used for data collection is titled Problems Confronting Student Teachers during Teaching Practice Questionnaire (PCSTPQ). It is divided into two sections. Section A is on the demographic information of the respondents while section B contained information related to the variables of the research. Five point likert scale was used;

Strongly Agree (SA)	-	4 points
Agree (A)	-	3 points
Disagree (D)	-	2 points
Strongly Disagree (SD)	-	1 point

The student teachers were administered, the questionnaire with a 100% return rate. The research questions were answered using mean scores, while the hypotheses were analysed using chi square statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

The decision rule is that, if the mean is 2.50 or above, it was accepted, while below 2.50, it was rejected.

Results

The data collected were analysed for both the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One

Do the student teachers possess the prerequisite knowledge of the teaching practice exercise?

Table 1: Mean Rating of Student Teachers’ Possession of Prerequisite Knowledge of Teaching Practice Exercise

S/No	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1.	Student-teachers register teaching practices as a prerequisite course	64	80	0	0	3.31	Accept
2.	Students teachers usually take observational exercise in assigned schools before actual teaching practice	33	82	30	5	2.95	Accept
3.	Student-teachers participate in peer teaching exercise before teaching practice	34	66	41	9	2.83	Accept
4.	Student-teachers participate in micro-teaching exercise before teaching practice exercise	70	80	0	0	3.47	Accept
Cluster Mean						2.94	

Table 1 shows the mean rating of **2.94**, showing that the student teachers possess prerequisite knowledge of the teaching practice exercise before they go for their teaching practice exercise.

Research Question Two

How does the duration of the teaching practice influence the student teachers’ performance during the teaching practice exercise?

From the responses, the time duration of the teaching practice exercise influence the student teachers in the following ways:

Table 2: Frequency of Responses from the Respondents

S/No	Item	Frequency %	Remarks
1.	A long duration for the T.P. exercise makes it more effective	50	33.30
2.	Long duration enables the supervisors to do better evaluation on the T.P. student teachers	42	28
3.	The student teachers gain needed experience when longer time duration is allowed.	30	20
4.	The mastery of the teaching experience goes with longer time for practical teaching	16	10.70
5.	There is better student-teacher interactions with longer time	12	8
Total Average Percentage =		150	

“Long duration for teaching practice exercise makes it more effective” gave the highest score of 50 (33.30%), while “there is better student teachers’ interactions with longer time” scored 12(8%), the lowest of the items.

Research Question Three

What Problems Confront the Student teachers during teaching practice exercise?

From the respondents, the following problems confront student teachers during teaching practice exercise. They are:

Table 3: Problems Confronting Teaching Practice students

S/No	Item	Frequency %	Remarks
1.	Problem of preparing lesson plan for teaching	40	
2.	Large class with high pupil/student/T.P. affect teaching	25	
3.	Lack of instructional materials for T.P. student teachers to use for teaching	24	
4.	The student teachers’ work load during T.P. is very high	20	
5.	Most schools prefer male students than the female student teachers	18	
6.	Lack of staff room big enough to accommodate teaching staff, so most T.P. student teachers have no seat in the school.	15	
7.	Most student teachers cannot manage their time during teaching duration (per class period)	8	

Hypotheses Testing

The two hypotheses were analysed using chi square and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One

The duration of the teaching practice exercise has no significant influence on the student teachers’ performance in the exercise.

Table 3: Chi square test of the Influence of the Duration of the T.P. Exercise on Student Teachers’ Performance

Response	O	E	DF	X ² cal	X ² tab	Sig	Decision
SA	32.25	37.5	3	18.19	7.82	0.05	Rejected
A	52.25	37.5					
D	46.75	37.5					
SD	18.75	37.5					
Total	150	150					

Table 3, chi square calculated (X²cal = 18.19) is greater than the critical value (X²tab = 7.82). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the duration of the teaching practice (T.P.) exercise has significant influence on the student teachers’ performance in their teaching practice exercise.

Hypothesis Two

The problems confronting student teachers during teaching practice exercise have no significant influence on their performance in the teaching exercise.

Table 4: Chi square test on the Problems Confronting Student Teachers during their Teaching Practice Exercise

Response	O	E	DF	X²cal	X²tab	Sig	Decision
SA	46.50	37.5	3	15.94	7.82	0.05	
A	51.25	37.5					
D	32.00	37.5					
SD	20.25	37.5					
Total	150	150					

From Table 4, the null hypothesis is rejected, since **X²cal (15.94)** is greater than the critical chi square value (**X²tab = 7.82**). This means that the problems confronting student teachers during the teaching practice exercise have a significant influence on student teachers’ performance in the exercise.

Discussion of Findings

Education is a major thing that is happening in many countries, including Nigeria. It is therefore important to have functional teachers with prominent roles to play in the development of the country, especially in this 21st century, of access to information and functional teacher education.

The results of the findings in terms of the possession of prerequisite knowledge of the teaching practice exercise by the student teachers from the Faculty of Education, Benue State University, Makurdi, it was found that they do possess prerequisite knowledge of the exercise. Ekundayo, Alonge, Kolawole and Ekunayo (2014) revealed that student teachers, in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria do not have the opportunity to interact with partnership schools before the real exercise begins. This has worsened when micro-teaching exercises are not always organized for the student teachers. All these account for the inadequate preparation of the students for the exercise. How many universities organize for micro-teaching exercise at the university today?

Problem of time duration gave several reasons why longer time should be allowed for the teaching practice exercise. However, the hypothesis found that the duration of the teaching practice exercise has significant influence on the student teachers’ performance in the exercise. They have more time to perfect in the act of teaching as well as better interactions. This is in disagreement with Okobia, Augustine and Osagie (2013) who revealed that student teachers complained that during the teaching practice exercise, some lecturers in the serving departments, continue to hold their lectures. This act usually affects and influences the student teachers on their teaching practice exercise (Moore, 1989, Agogo et al, 2018).

On the problems confronting the student teachers during teaching practice exercise, several problems were identified. It was found that the problems confronting student teachers during the teaching practice exercise has significant influence on student teachers’ performance in the exercise. The implication is that, both the student teachers, the school system and the stakeholders (like the Ministry of Education and School Proprietors) should come together to address them. It is important to stress that,

teaching practice exercise is very basic for graduates from the Faculty of Education and all students from the Colleges of Education for good job performance (Nwoke, 2004, and Capel, 1997). This exercise is their first outing as prospective teachers.

Summary

The study investigated into the problems that confront teaching practice students, particularly from the Faculty of Education, Benue State University, Makurdi. The importance of teaching practice exercise to all the students from the Faculty of Education, is established and the need to meaningfully sustain it. The study revealed that:

1. The student teachers from Faculty of Education possess the prerequisite knowledge of the teaching practice exercise from their lecturers and the micro-teaching exercises some lecturers hold with their students.
2. The duration of the teaching practice exercise has significant influence on the student teachers' performance in the exercise.
3. The problems confronting student teachers during teaching practice exercise have a significant influence on their performance in the exercise before graduation.

Conclusion

There are some problems that the student teachers face during their teaching practice exercise. Some problems have been identified in the study. It is expected that, single parenthood should be avoided so as to strengthen the academic performance of children coming from such a family. The teaching practice exercise is a practical session all prospective teachers should exercise.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made for this study:

1. Lecturers of Education methods and indeed the school system should encourage micro-teaching exercise for their prospectus student teachers to acquire prerequisite knowledge of the teaching practice exercise.
2. Student teachers' supervisors should be patient with their teaching practice students during supervision. They should give them all their observed criticisms to enable these teaching practice students grasp its tenets. This is why longer time duration is advocated for.
3. The student teachers should be encouraged in all ways possible to enable these students perform their teaching practice with minimal problems.
4. The student teachers should meaningfully integrate themselves into the systems of their cooperating schools to gain maximally from their teaching practice exercise.

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