

Teaching Practice among Undergraduates of Faculty of Education in Public Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public universities in Rivers State. The study was guided by three objectives and three research questions. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 6,680 students from the Faculty of Education of the three public universities in Rivers State. 1,336 students, representing 20% of the total population were drawn as sample size, using the stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Teaching Practice among Undergraduates of Faculty of Education in Public Universities Scale (TPUFEPUS). The instrument was validated and Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability index of the instrument which yielded 0.87. Mean and Standard Deviation statistics were used to answer the three research questions. The findings of the study revealed that there are many challenges facing students during teaching practice exercises which have made the exercise ineffective as regards achieving the goals for which it was designed. Also, it was revealed that undergraduates have a positive attitude toward teaching practice except that they don't possess the 21st-century skills needed to make teaching interesting. Based on this, it was recommended among others that universities should have a micro-teaching laboratory where student teachers will be exposed to the rudiments of teaching; this will enable them to gain enough confidence during the real exercise. Also, universities through their faculties should support the student teachers with some stipend, this will help to ease their transportation fares and reduce the rate the students abscond from the schools they are posted to.

Keywords: Teaching Practice, Undergraduate, Universities, student-teacher, 21st-century skills.

Introduction

Education has been described as the bedrock of every society and a tool for nation-building. The teacher must be adequate in quality and quantity, while students must be well trained and facilities provided as well for effective teaching and learning. The teacher has the responsibility of translating educational policy into practice and programmes into action. Both teaching and learning depend on teachers, no wonder an effective teacher has been conceptualised as one who produces desired results in the course of his duty as a teacher (Uchefuna, 2011). Personal experience has shown that some of these problems are student-teacher-related problems while some are institution(universities) related problems and some are school of teaching practice-related problems. Nakpodia (2011) remarked that the period of twelve weeks is too short as it does not provide the student teacher with ample opportunity to effectively gain the experience that the exercise is intended to encourage. The author remarked that some supervisors do not have time to sit down and discuss their observations and comments with the student teacher. The short discussion between the supervisor and the student teacher just after the lesson supervision

which should allow the student teacher to appreciate his strengths and weaknesses is often ignored because the supervisor is often in a haste to move to the next school.

Teaching practice occupies a key position in the teacher education programme. It is an integral part of the teacher education programme which is geared towards the preparation of new entrants into the teaching profession. According to Afolabi (2000), as cited in Onyebukwa-Nwanoro (2017), teaching practice exercise is to acquaint student teachers with the practical knowledge of the teaching and learning process including lesson plan preparation, presentation, class management, communication skills, evaluation, and the required personality of professional teachers. From the foregoing, it can be inferred that teaching practice is a school-based internship programme with the main aim of introducing prospective teachers to teaching and its routine under the guidance of qualified professionals to develop skills, attitudes, and competence in the profession.

Teaching practice exercise is a vital and indispensable programme for every teacher in training. It is indeed practical education or applied education. A teacher who has had this experience and took it seriously always turns out a good teacher, hence the primary aim is to make ideal teachers real. Performance during teaching practice provides some basis for predicting the future success of the teacher, still, some undergraduate students don't take it seriously but rather joke with it or see it as a waste of time and energy. If the attitude of undergraduate students is not checked properly as regards teaching practice then the hope of effective teachers in the 21st century might be lost or hampered. Teaching practice involves the preparation of student teachers for teaching through practical training. Since it is been done in the 21st century the student teachers ought to be prepared in alignment with the 21st-century skills of teaching which include: Maintaining good communication skills, Getting students' engagement, Encouraging individualistic learning, etc. However, if the student teachers are not properly grounded in 21st-century skills they might find the teaching process not interesting and see it as a relatively old way of teaching without new skills or methodology. Teaching practice is a crucial aspect of any teacher training programme, therefore; it should be handled with proper attention by lecturers in the supervision process for effective results.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the relevance and purpose of the teaching practice exercise in the teacher preparatory programme, it has been observed that several challenges appear to hamper the optimum realization of its objectives in the professional growth of students in training. Many student teachers get agitated about entering the classrooms to take up teaching tasks in unfamiliar environments. Some undergraduates undergoing teaching practice have failed to recognise themselves as prospective custodian of knowledge, while some tend to display a nonchalant attitude to this training and think it's not necessary for their educational or academic training in school. Based on this attitude some undergraduates after completion of school find it difficult to accept teaching jobs and some that accept careers find it difficult to deliver in the instructional

process. Currently, observations have shown that there is a decline in the quality of teaching practice courses being taught in the universities in Nigeria. It appears that teaching practice courses as being taught in the universities is considered to be obsolete, and as such cannot meet the need of the 21st-century dispensation of teaching. Thus, it is on this premise that this study sought to examine the topic: teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to examine teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives sought to:

1. Ascertain the attitude of undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State towards teaching practice.
2. Identify problems facing teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State.
3. Identify solutions to the problems of teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. What is the attitude of undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State towards teaching practice?
2. What are the problems facing teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State?
3. What are the solutions to problems of teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 6680 undergraduates from the Faculty of Education of the three public Universities in Rivers State, which are: University of Port Harcourt (2,624 students) source: teaching practice unit, Rivers State University (2,051 students) source: teaching practice unit, and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (2,005 students) source: teaching practice unit. 1,336 students, representing 20% of the total population were drawn as sample size, using the stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Teaching Practice among Undergraduates of Faculty of Education in Public Universities Scale (TPUFEPUS). It consisted of Sections A and B. Section A deals with the demographic information of the respondents, while Section B deals with variables from the research questions which were used to elicit information from the respondents. The items are structured after the modified four-point Likert-type rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly

Disagree (SD) = 1. The reliability of the instrument was determined through Cronbach alpha which yielded an index of 0.87. As part of data collection, the researcher designed and distributed 1,336 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents, 1,244 copies were retrieved and found suitable for analysis resulting in a 99% retrieval rate. Data collected from the study were analyzed using mean statistics to answer the three research questions. 2.50 served as the criterion mean for judgment.

Results and Analysis

The results of the analysed data for each research question and its corresponding hypothesis are presented in tables.

Table 1: Demographic Analysis of Data

SN	Institution	No of Questionnaire distributed	Total Number Retrieved	Retrieved Rate %
1	University of Port Harcourt (Uniport)	491	461	37.06
2	Rivers State University (RSU)	428	398	31.99
3	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE)	417	385	30.95
	Total	1336	1244	100

From Table 1 above, 461 of the respondents were from the University of Port Harcourt (Uniport) representing 37.06%, while 398 were respondents from Rivers State University (RSU) representing 31.99%, and 385 were respondents from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) representing 30.95% of the total respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by their Gender

S/No	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Male	561	45.10
2	Female	683	54.90
	Total	153	100

Table 2 revealed that 561 respondents were male representing 45.10%, while 683 were female respondents representing 54.90%.

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State towards teaching practice?

Table 3: Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Attitude of Undergraduates of Faculty of Education in Public Universities in Rivers State towards Teaching Practice

S/No	Items	Mean x	sd	Decision
1.	I like to teach my lesson more than watching the regular teacher use my period.	3.2	.98	Accepted
2.	Teaching practice is a very good experience and should be extended to 3 months.	3.3	.73	Accepted
3.	I am always there at my school whether I have a period to teach or not.	3.2	.87	Accepted
4.	I am always ready with my lesson notes and instructional materials.	3.3	.92	Accepted
5.	I know the teaching practice skills for the 21st-century teacher.	1.6	.56	Rejected
6.	I have a mutual understanding with my students and school authority.	3.0	.87	Accepted

Source: Researchers' Field Result

Note: In the above table, the decision of “**Rejected**” means that the respondents did not accept the item statement (which is below the criterion mean of **2.5**) while “**Accepted**” means that the respondents accept the item statement (which is above the criterion mean of **2.5**).

From Table 3 the results show that items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 have an accepted mean of 3.2, 3.3, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.0 respectively because they are above the criterion mean score of 2.5. This reveals that these items were accepted by the respondents as the attitudes of undergraduates toward teaching practice. However, item 5 has a rejected mean of 1.6 which is below the criterion mean score of 2.5, thus, it is not the attitude of undergraduates toward teaching practice.

Research Question 2: What are the problems facing teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 4: Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the problems facing teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State

S/No	Items	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Decision
7	Lack of accommodation for the student teachers especially those posted far from the university.	3.4	.81	Accepted
8	Lack of necessary equipment, facilities, and materials for orientation/preparation of students before the commencement of teaching practice exercise.	3.4	.88	Accepted
9	Student-teachers don't know the teaching practice skills for the 21st-century teacher.	3.3	.82	Accepted
10	Rejection of student-teachers by school posted to.	4.7	.80	Accepted
11	Inaccessibility of some schools' locations by student-teachers.	3.2	.79	Accepted
12	Short practicing period.	3.1	.84	Accepted
13	Student teachers are faced with poor learning environments and overcrowded classrooms.	2.7	.77	Accepted
14	Lack of cooperation from the subject teacher or school principal.	3.0	.87	Accepted
15	Imposition of topics and subjects on the student-teacher by practicing school subject teacher.	2.9	.79	Accepted
16	Poor interpersonal relationship between faculty-supervisor and student teachers during supervision.	2.8	.81	Accepted

Source: Researchers' Field Result

The result from Table 4 reveals that the mean ratings of items 7 to 16 respectively show that is above the criterion mean of 2.5, which indicates that the respondents accepted that they are all challenges faced by undergraduates during teaching practice.

Research Question 3: What are the solutions to problems of teaching practice among undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 5: Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Solutions to Problems of Teaching Practice among Undergraduates of Faculty of Education in Public Universities in Rivers State.

S/No	Items	Mean \bar{x}	sd	Decision
17	Teaching practice handbook should be made available to student teachers.	3.0	.80	Accepted
18	Lecturers should inform the students when they want to visit each school for supervision.	2.2	.72	Rejected
19	The school authority should liaise with distant schools to arrange accommodations for the student-teachers.	3.3	.83	Accepted
20	Micro-teaching laboratories should be put in place and be used to groom the students well enough before teaching practice exercises.	3.0	.89	Accepted
21	Student-teachers should be sent to schools that are within the university.	2.9	.82	Accepted
22	Lecturers should not collect gifts either in the form of money or materials from student-teachers.	3.2	.79	Accepted
23	Objectives of teaching practice should be clearly stated to student-teachers, including the 21st-century skills of teaching.	3.2	.81	Accepted

Source: Researchers' Field Result

The result from Table 5 shows that items 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23 are solutions to the problems of undergraduates during teaching practice with an accepted mean of 2.9 and above, while item 18 has a mean of 2.2 which is below the criterion mean score of 2.5, thus, it is not a solution to the problems or challenges facing undergraduates during teaching practice.

Discussion of Findings

The first findings of this study indicated that undergraduates of faculty of education in public Universities in Rivers State have a positive attitude towards teaching practice except that the majority don't know the teaching practice skills for the 21st-century teacher. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Amuda (2017), who expressed that the teaching performance of the student-teachers during teaching practice was satisfactory, this indicates a positive attitude by undergraduates towards teaching-practice exercise. A similar study on "the place of teaching practice in Nigerian universities" carried out by Oyediji and Oke (2020), revealed that the level of effectiveness of teaching practice exercises in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan is high and encouraging, this affirms that there is a positive attitude towards teaching practice by the undergraduates. This finding is also in tandem with Afolabi (2000) as cited in Onyebukwa-Nwanoro (2017) who in his study "Assessment of students on teaching practice in College of Education Ilorin discovered that students are willing to go on teaching practice but they lack the necessary knowledge and skills required of them to excel in the exercise. The implication of this

is that it can lead to student-teachers considering teaching practice exercises as relatively boring practice because they don't know the required skills or techniques to use in the classroom. After all, it is been carried out in the 21st century. Hence, they might lack classroom control.

Furthermore, the second finding of the study indicated agreement that all the listed items in Table 4 are challenges faced by undergraduate students during teaching practice. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Akpede (2011), whose study revealed that student teachers faced a lot of challenges including lack of accommodation, lack of cooperation from school-based teachers, lack of instructional materials and resources in schools, lack of allowances, excess workload lack of respect for student teachers. A study carried out by Ekundayo et al (2014), revealed a rejection challenge which stated that student-teachers (undergraduates) are often being rejected in schools where they are posted. This seems to demoralise the morale of the prospective teachers in schools where they will be eventually accepted. A related study by Sackey, Bentil, and Asiedu (2018), revealed that one of the challenges undergraduates faced during teaching practice is that some of the lead/head teachers transfer all their classroom duties entirely to the trainees and hardly guide them as they should. One of their findings indicates that lead/head teachers were not detailed-oriented in vetting the notes prepared by student-teachers as avoidable grammatical errors were left unidentified for modification. This finding is in line with the second finding of the study on the challenges encountered by undergraduates (student-teachers).

In a similar study by Nwanekezi, et al (2011) carried out at the University of Port Harcourt, some of the problems identified were; lack of necessary equipment and materials for student teachers; poor learning environment in the practicing schools like congested classrooms, poor ventilation; rejection of student teachers by schools; lack of transportation and inaccessibility of some schools; and the unwillingness of student teachers to report at their duty post. This also concurred with the further finding which revealed that one major challenge faced by undergraduate students is "rejection of student-teachers by school posted to", this seems to reduce the morale of the prospective teachers in schools where they are finally accepted.

Lastly, the third finding of the study revealed that the respondents agreed that all the listed items in Table 5 are the solutions to the challenges facing undergraduate students during teaching practice. This finding corroborates Onyebukwa-Nwanoro (2017) and Koross (2016) who in their various studies noted that the solutions to the challenges facing undergraduate students during teaching practice include; schools of education and colleges should organize the teaching practice exercise very well so as to give the best professional practice to the trainee teachers, proper orientation for student teachers should be carried out using efficient means of communication like; seminars, workshops, conferences and discussion before they go for teaching practice, student teachers should participate at least once or twice in micro-teaching exercises as a way of exposing them to teaching practice, the universities should appeal to the government, non-governmental organizations like the private sector, individuals and industries to assist in supplementing educational materials and learning resource that would prepare the

students teachers, cooperating teachers should be trained on their roles while working with the student teachers, and government should provide finance in form of stipend for student teachers so as to boost their upkeep and their attitude towards the profession. Ekundayo et al (2014), carried out a study titled "Teaching Practice Exercise for Education Students in Nigerian Universities: Challenges and the Way Forward." postulated the following as solutions to the challenges faced by undergraduates (student-teachers) during teaching practice exercise; There should be proper orientation for undergraduates (student-teachers) before going on teaching practice exercise, during this orientation exercise, micro-teaching could be organised for the undergraduates (student-teachers), this will expose them to real confidence during the actual exercise; and the university authority should give the undergraduates (student-teachers) some financial aid for their upkeep during the period of teaching practice, this will help lessen their accommodation and transportation problem and as well reduce the rate at which students decline at will the school/places they are posted; there is the need for an increase in the period of the teaching practice exercise, a longer duration would provide ample opportunity for the practice of professional activities associated with teaching by the prospective teachers; partnership school heads should be given proper orientation on the need to fully incorporate the undergraduates (student-teachers) during the internship exercise; and the faculty authority should always find out beforehand schools where the services of the undergraduates (student-teachers) are needed to avoid the humiliation of rejection. Fatimayin (2021), posits a suggestion in the area of teaching practice assessment on the factor of subjectivity in assessment when only one supervisor assesses undergraduates (student-teachers) as follows that; To obtain a valid and fairly objective assessment of student-teacher, two or more supervisors should assess the trainee during the six weeks and the scores can be collated and the average used as the final score.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there are many challenges facing students during teaching practice exercises that have made the exercise ineffective as regards achieving the goals for which it was designed. However, undergraduates (student-teachers) have a positive attitude toward teaching practice except that they do not possess the 21st-century skills needed to make teaching interesting. More so, the solutions which the respondents agreed to are best on their own. Hence, the following are recommended for the study.

Recommendations

1. Universities should have a micro-teaching laboratory where undergraduates (student-teachers) will be exposed to the rudiments of teaching; this will enable them to gain enough confidence during the real exercise.
2. Universities through their faculties should support the undergraduates (student-teachers) with some stipend, this will help to ease their transportation fare and reduce the rate the students abscond from the schools they are posted to.

3. Teaching practice handbook should be made available for undergraduates (student-teachers) to have a uniform pattern/method of writing lesson notes.
4. Universities' faculty teaching practice units should always find out if schools are in need of undergraduates (student-teachers) to avoid the embarrassment of rejection.
5. Universities should have a specific duration of the teaching practice exercise. A longer time would provide ample opportunity for the practice of professional activities associated with teaching by prospective teachers.
6. Undergraduates (student-teachers) should be sent to schools that are within the university.

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