

MANAGING TEACHING PRACTICE EXERCISE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study focused on managing teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Two research questions and one hypothesis were answered and tested respectively in the study. The design of the study was descriptive survey design while the population of the study consisted four tertiary institutions offering teacher education programmes in the state. The population of respondents comprised 5,978 students and 802 supervisors thus, giving a total of 6,780 respondents. The sample size of 475 respondents, comprising 385 students and 90 supervisors was drawn from the population of the study through Taro Yamane sample determination technique using disproportionate sampling technique. The instruments used for data collection was the questionnaire titled "Questionnaire for Managing Teaching Practice in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State" (QMTPTIRS). The questionnaire items were responded to on a four point modified Likert scale. The face and content validity were determined by experts while the reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach Alpha with reliability index of 0.72. The research questions were answered using mean while the hypotheses were tested using z-test statistic. The findings of the study revealed that duration of teaching practice is not adequate and that student-teachers were hardly provided with any incentives to enable them carry out the exercise successfully. The study therefore concluded that teaching practice exercise was not well carried out in the state. It was recommended among others that duration of teaching practice should be extended to one year and incentives provided to students on teaching practice.

Keywords: Managing, Teaching Practice Exercise, Tertiary Institutions

Introduction

The vital role teachers play in the education system of any nation cannot be over-emphasized. As long as education remains a vital instrument for national development, the position of the teacher as an essential factor in the development of the nation's manpower will continue to be of prime importance. The teachers are responsible for transforming the nation's educational programmes into reality. This emphasizes the place of the teacher in quality education. For any meaningful development to take place in any country, its education system must be of the right quality. However, there cannot be quality education system without quality teachers. The Nigerian National Policy on Education recognized this fact when it stated that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2014). The document

therefore emphasizes that teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. What this implies is that quality teachers can only be a product of quality education particularly teacher education. It is believed that if skilled, knowledgeable, competent and motivated teachers are sent to schools in their right numbers, given the enabling environment, students' performance morally and academically will improve, and consequently, the laudable national educational goals and objectives will also be achieved.

However, it should be noted that teacher education comprises of two aspects: The theoretical aspect which gives theoretical knowledge and the practical aspect which imparts practical knowledge. The theoretical knowledge is acquired in teacher training institutions while practical knowledge is acquired in the field during field work, that is, internship popularly known as teaching practice.

In Nigeria, there is a policy framework supporting internship for the teaching profession. Number 78c of the Nigeria National Policy on Education provided for internship (popularly known as teaching practice) when it stated that "Newly qualified teachers shall serve a period of internship one (1) year for degree holders and two (2) years for NCE holders"(FRN,2014 :31). Additionally, the National Teachers Education Policy (NTEP), Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) all provided for teaching practice for would-be teachers (NTEP, 2009; NUC, 2007; NCCE, 2009; TRCN, 2007). NTEP (2009) and TRCN (2007) recommended one full year of teaching practice exercise for would-be teachers, to be taken in the 5th year of their study, thereby advocating a 5-year teacher education programme. In a similar manner, the National Universities Commission (2007) benchmark minimum academic standards for undergraduate education programmes in Nigerian universities tagged teaching practice as 'Edu 500' with six(6) credit units attached to it (NUC, 2007:19-20). The document further stated in number 2.1.5.2 (9 and 6) that students who secured admission into education faculty through Unified Matriculation Examination (UME) shall spend 5 years while Direct Entry (having passed NCE or Diploma) shall spend four (4) academic years. The emphasis here according to the NUC document is that teaching practice shall be taken in the 5th year of study for a whole semester that is, an average of 6 months. The reason for this provision is because of the importance of teaching practice.

Teaching practice has to do with practical implementation of teaching/learning strategies in the classroom (NUC, 2007). Afolabi (in Ekundayo, Alonge, Kolawole&Ekundayo, 2014) noted that teaching practice aim to acquaint student-teachers with the practical knowledge of teaching and learning process including lesson plan preparation, presentation, classroom control and management, communication skills, evaluation and to acquire the personality of a professional teacher. Also Nwakezi, Okoli and Mezieobi (2011) observed that teaching practice is the name given to preparation of student-teachers for teaching by practical teaching. According to Tanega (2000), the term teaching practice can be viewed from three angles: the practicing of teaching skills and acquisition of the role of a teacher, the whole range of experiences that students go through in co-operating school of practice, and the practical aspects of the course as distinct from theoretical studies. From the these therefore, it is pertinent to say that teaching practice as a crucial component of teacher education is designed to give opportunities to teacher-trainees to experiment, test-run and experience the result of application of the theoretical knowledge acquired in teacher training institutions. The importance of teaching practice lies in its goal of developing future teaching manpower who will turn develop the nation`s manpower. Thus, the focus of teaching practice is the development of student-teachers.

In achieving the objectives stated, the student-teachers have roles to play since teaching practice is for them. It is the responsibility of the students to go through the various stages of preparing and mobilizing students for teaching practice. It is also their duty to apply teaching practice code of conduct when dealing with different members and stakeholders of co-operating schools during teaching practice exercise. Most importantly, student-teachers have the task of remaining focused to the very goal and

objectives of teaching practice. Having high grades is not the reason for teaching practice but professional development is and student teachers must know and work towards achieving this. For student-teachers to be able to play their part effectively, the duration of the teaching practice must be adequate. In addition, incentives must be provided in order to motivate student-teachers and other participants remain focus and do what is expected of them.

Duration of Teaching Practice in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State

Duration simply refers to the time during which something lasts or continues (Hornby, 2005). It is a period from the beginning to the end of something, exercise, event and so on. It is the lifespan of an event or exercise. In this context, duration refers to period teaching practice is meant to last. Currently in Nigeria, teaching practice exercise lasts for a period of twelve weeks in all (Nwaokugha&Okoro, 2017). The twelve weeks are shared into six weeks of two sessions. What this means is that teaching practice is usually embarked upon twice by students of Colleges of Education at the beginning of year two and year three respectively while their counterparts in Universities' faculties of education go for teaching practice at the end of year two and years three respectively for six weeks each (Robert-Okah, 2005). This is similar to what is obtainable in Uganda and Kenya (Gujjar, Naoreen, Saifi&Bajwa, 2010; Kiggundu&Nayimuli, 2009).

Infact, to be able to effectively discuss the issue of duration of teaching practice, it is imperative to consider developments in other professions with respect to the duration of their internship. In Engineering, Technology and Sciences, internship is observed for a period of six months. In Agriculture, it is one year (Fasuyi, 2016). In Medicine, it is two years of housemanship (Nigeria Health Watch, 2016) but in Education, it is three months, whereas in reality, it is just sixty working days (Nwaokugha&Okoro, 2017; Robert-Okah, 2005). It is yet to be known if this is the reason why other professions argue that teaching is not a profession eventhough it is the mother of all professions. A lot of arguments have been documented on the issue of duration of teaching practice, noting that three months is too short a period to master the critical skills, competencies and experiences as well as the understanding of the intricacies of the teaching profession (Nwaokugha&Okoro, 2017; Robert-Okah, 2005). Moreover, teaching profession is becoming more and more complex by the day with the contemporary challenges posed by the digital world, expansion in knowledge and changes in the value system. Based on this, how realistic can teaching practice of three months be in preparing and equipping teaching manpower that will in turn, produce the manpower needed for economic growth and development is yet to be understood.

This issue is not peculiar to teaching profession in Nigeria alone as discussed earlier as there are other countries with similar calendar. Examples of such countries are Cameroon, Uganda, Kenya, Pakistan, and so on. Any serious observer who takes a critical look at the happenings in the teaching practice can see that it takes the period between 8-10 weeks in Uganda, 4-6 weeks in Pakistan, about 12 weeks in Nigeria and Cameroon. This is when there is no industrial action which is a common feature in some of these countries' education sector (Endeley, 2014; Kiggundu&Nayimuli, 2009; Bhagarava, 2009; Nwaokugha&Okoro, 2017).

Thus, irrespective of the duration of teaching practice in various teacher educational institutions, it is expected that at the end of the exercise (whether done in a day, week, month or more), that practicing students must be found to have been mentored, guided and supervised as well as acquired experiences, skills and competencies in the following: preparing school time-table, marking and completing school registers and diaries, marking learners classwork and homework, tests and examinations, helping in tutorials and extra-mural classes, lesson plan/note preparation, lesson presentation, classroom management, engaging in general duties before, during and after school hours and attending meetings in school (Nwaokugha&Okoro, 2017). From the above, it appears that 12weeks duration for teaching practice may not be enough to accommodate and master all the skills already mentioned. It is also

doubtful if some of the activities of the school can be experienced by student-teachers within the short period of stay for the exercise.

Incentives Provision for Students on Teaching Practice

Many questions bothering on lack of commitment by student-teachers are being asked in order to probe into the issue of commitment especially by student-teachers. There seems to be consensus among researchers on the possible cause of lack of commitment by students as research findings have shown that lack of incentives top the list (Farauta&Amuche, 2013). Incentive is that which encourages someone to do more of something. It is an inducement or supplemental reward that serves as a motivational device for a desired behavior (Businessdictionary, 2017). Incentive has the potential to encourage or motivate a person to work harder, become better and more effective. It is a performance-enhancer (Robin, 2017).

It is no news that teachers are among the least motivated set of workers in Nigeria even though teaching is one of the most important profession in the country. According to Eya (2002), the poor motivation of teachers in the country by successive governments has taken its toll on the teaching profession as well as on those coming into the profession as many people in the profession are low-spirited, discourage and poorly motivated. The attitude of government towards the profession and the education sector at large through their policies is not helping the already bad situation. No wonder that during admission, it is usually the left out that are pushed to education faculties as students while the best brains go to other faculties. Similarly, the cut-off marks for admission into Colleges of Education across the country is the least indicating that education in teacher training institutions is inferior to others (Ekundayo, Alonge, Kolawole&Ekundayo, 2014). This is an error that must not be allowed to continue. Regarding government's attitude, education is not the only profession with internship programme. There are other professions with internship programmes such as medicine with housemanship, Engineering and sciences has Industrial Attachment or Training (I.T). However, it appears teaching practice is the only internship programme neglected in that government did not provide any incentives for its participants. Students on Industrial training receive allowance while those participating in housemanship receive salaries and job placement but none for those participating in teaching practice (Ekundayo, Alonge, Kolawole&Ekundayo, 2014).

There are various ways government can provide incentives to student-teachers in order to encourage them. For instance, studies have shown that student-teachers face accommodation problems when posted for teaching practice (Nwaokugha, 2010; Nakpodia, 2011). This is so because students may not be native of the communities they are posted to practice. As such, there would be need for accommodation. Usually, co-operating schools do not provide accommodation to student teachers. As such, the responsibility of the cost of accommodation becomes a burden to students. This alone has made some student-teachers abscond from the exercise only to report on the day of supervision. Some resume and quit the exercise immediately after supervision while others do not report at all but buy over the exercise (Nakpodia, 2011; Robins, 2017).

Similarly, student-teachers face the challenge of transportation from where they stay to the schools of teaching practice. Azeem (2011) observed that student-teachers spent an average of ₦200 everyday on transportation in rural areas and ₦300 in urban areas. Azeem added that sometimes, student-teachers who cannot afford the transport fees are forced to trek long distances to schools from their houses while those who do not have the strength to trek stay away from school. Supporting the above, Nakpodia (2011) observed that transportation challenges to an extent, account for lateness as well as absenteeism among student-teachers. Thus, both accommodation and transportation challenges are money-related problems and this bring to the fore the issue of funding teaching practice in Nigeria. Azeem (2011) noted that in the early days of teaching practice in Nigeria, student-teachers were given financial assistance in the form of allowance and this went a long way in assisting them to meet their

related needs at that time and thus enhanced their performance. Unfortunately, the economic recession of the late 80s forced government to stop the financial assistance to student-teachers and even when the economy picked again, government never restore the status quo. Since then as observed by Azeem, student-teachers have been forced to face teaching practice with its financial burdens. The pressure is even made worse in schools where students were compelled to buy on their own instructional materials for teaching because they were not given.

However, Oluwatayo and Adebule (2012) have argued that supporting student-teachers financially is not sustainable and therefore should not be encouraged. The proponents of the argument believed that any cost incurred by student-teachers during teaching practice is part of their education and such cost should not be treated differently. After all, they would still have incurred cost even in their teacher training schools. As true as the argument may appear, Oluwatayo&Adebule failed to realize that many of the students mobilized for teaching practice are posted outside communities hosting their campuses. Some are even posted to communities they have never been to and where they do not have any relation or friend. Thus, such students are forced to incur extra cost of accommodation (in addition to their accommodation cost on campus which is still running) and transportation expenses. Furthermore, resulting from change of environment, there have been reported cases of student falling sick during teaching practice with no provision for free health care (Eya, 2002). Some died due to delayed treatment or poor treatment of ailments while the lucky ones had to spend good amount of money to treat themselves (Eya, 2002). In likewise manner, Bhagarava (2009) pointed out that student-teachers were made to purchase instructional materials which ought to have been provided to them as incentives during teaching practice. Bhagarava therefore advocated that allowance be paid to student teachers on the strength that they incur additional expenses as a result of teaching practice. He also noted that since 'what is good for goose is also good for the gander', if financial incentives are good for industrial training and housemanship, it is also certain that it will be good for teaching practice.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching practice as an internship programme, designed to equip students with practical teaching skills, has come a long way. However, looking at the objectives of teaching practice, one is poised to ask if these teaching practice objectives are still being achieved? The question is crucial considering what is happening in schools nowadays in terms of teachers' quality. A situation where teachers cannot write lesson notes, communicate the content to students effectively and be abreast with the basic ethics of the teaching profession has certainly necessitated the question. Also, employers of labour appear to be supporting the above as they too complain about the quality of products from the system. They lament the state of quality of teacher training institutions graduates that many of them lack skills in writing of lesson notes, management of classrooms, lesson presentation, and so on and argued that they spend the same amount of money in training education graduates just as their counterparts who had no education background. Does this therefore means that teaching practice has little or no impact on graduates of education or why is there no difference in the cost training of newly employed teachers with education background from their counterparts who had no education background?

The foregoing calls for urgent attention appraisal of teaching practice exercise (as currently being implemented) in tertiary institutions in Rivers State in order to ascertain its level of contributions in equipping teacher-trainees as well as developing teaching manpower in the state and the country at large. The assessment is apt in order to ascertain the role of variables such as lack of incentives, shortage of instructional materials, inadequate supervision as well as other variables in determining the smoothness, effectiveness and efficiency of teaching practice in Nigeria. It is on this note the researcher is compelled to carry out an assessment of teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of the study:

- i. To ascertain the adequacy of duration of teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
- ii. To find out the incentives that is provided for students during teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What duration is adequate for teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
- ii. What are the incentives provided for students on teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The hypothesis below was tested in the course of the study:

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students and supervisors on incentives provided for students on teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive survey design while the population of the study consisted four tertiary institutions offering teacher education programmes in the state. The population of respondents comprised 5,978 students and 802 supervisors thus, giving a total of 6,780 respondents. The sample size of 475 respondents, comprising 385 students and 90 supervisors was drawn from the population of the study through Taro Yamane sample determination technique using disproportionate sampling technique. The instruments used for data collection was the questionnaire title "Questionnaire for Assessment of Teaching Practice in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State" (QATPTIRS). The questionnaire items were responded to on a four point modified Likert scale. The face and content validity were determined by experts while the reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach Alpha with reliability index of 0.72. The research questions were answered using mean while the hypotheses were tested using z-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. In scoring the questionnaire, the weighted points were added thus $(4+3+2+1) = 10/4 = 2.50$. The 2.50 became the criterion mean. Items above the criterion mean were agreed to and items below it were disagreed.

Results

Research Question One: What duration is adequate for teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of students and supervisors on adequacy of the duration for teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Items	Students			Supervisors		
	Mean	N=385 SD	Remark	Mean	N=90 SD	Remark
11. The current duration of three months for teaching practice exercise is considered?	2.45	1.12	Not Adequate	1.94	1.25	Not Adequate
12. Six months duration for teaching practice is?	2.98	1.22	Adequate	3.19	1.31	Adequate
13. Extending the duration of teaching practice to 1 year will be?	2.08	1.2	Not Adequate	3.34	1.4	Adequate
Mean & Standard Deviation Average	2.5	1.18	Adequate	2.82	1.32	Adequate

The table revealed average means of 2.50 and 2.82 for students and supervisors respectively, indicating that duration of teaching practice beyond three months is considered adequate while a duration of three months is considered inadequate.

Research Question Two: What are the incentives provided for students on teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of students and supervisors on provision of incentives for students on teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Items	Students N=385			Supervisors N=90		
	Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
14. Government provides accommodation to student-teachers during teaching practice.	1.48	1.51	Disagreed	1.28	1.65	Disagreed
15. Co-operating schools provide accommodation to student-teachers during teaching practice.	1.52	1.49	Disagreed	1.26	1.67	Disagreed
16. Student-teachers are provided with instructional materials during teaching practice.	2.14	1.17	Disagreed	2.99	1.22	Agreed
17. Student-teachers are provided with transportation allowance during teaching practice.	1.41	1.56	Disagreed	1.41	1.56	Disagreed
18. Student-teachers have access to free health care during teaching practice.	1.36	1.6	Disagreed	1.41	1.56	Disagreed
19. Student-teachers are provided with feeding allowance during teaching practice.	1.34	1.61	Disagreed	1.28	1.65	Disagreed
20. Student-teachers are given free meal by co-operating schools during teaching practice.	1.37	1.59	Disagreed	1.35	1.6	Disagreed
21. The security of student-teachers is taken seriously by co-operating schools during teaching practice.	2.06	1.2	Disagreed	1.45	1.53	Disagreed
22. There is insurance cover for every student posted for teaching practice.	1.43	1.55	Disagreed	1.37	1.59	Disagreed
23. Student-teachers are paid allowance during teaching practice like their counterparts during industrial training.	1.26	1.67	Disagreed	1.4	1.57	Disagreed
Mean & Standard Deviation Average	1.54	1.5	Disagreed	1.52	1.56	Disagreed

With average means of 1.54 and 1.52 for students and supervisors as revealed in the table, it is cleared that little or no incentives were provided for student-teachers during teaching practice.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students and supervisors on incentives provided for students on teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 3: z-test of the significant difference between the mean scores of students and supervisors on incentives provided for students on teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Variables	N	X	SD	df	z-calculated	z-critical	Level of Significance	Decision
Students	385	1.54	1.5	473	0.14	1.96	0.05	Fail to reject
Supervisors	90	1.52	1.56					

The table also showed a summary of mean, standard deviations and z-test of the difference between the mean scores of students and supervisors on incentives provided for students on teaching practice in

tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The value of z-calculated stood at 0.14 while the value of z-critical ranges between -1.96 to +1.96 at 0.05 alpha level, while degree of freedom remained 473. Again, since the value of z-calculated is less than the value of z-critical, the researcher therefore failed to reject the null hypothesis that no significant difference between the mean scores of students and supervisors on incentives provided for students on teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Discussions

The study found that the duration of three months for teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State was inadequate for the exercise. The study however discovered that duration of six months was preferred by both students and supervisors. The reason for this could be as a result of the professionalization of teaching since the practical business of teaching is not something that can be learnt within three months of internship. This finding agrees with NUC (2007), NTEP (2010) and TRCN (2007) which all observed that duration of three months for teaching practice is too short a period for would-be teachers' internship and therefore recommended six months and one year duration accordingly.

Furthermore, the study found that student-teachers were hardly provided with any incentives to enable them carry out the exercise successfully. The study found that interns in other professional fields particularly Sciences were given allowances while in Medicine, interns were not only paid salaries but were also given greater opportunity to retain their jobs. It therefore appears that only interns in education were sideline from the incentives provided by government to interns. The study further revealed that student-teachers were neither provided with accommodation, transportation, healthcare, nor feeding allowances. The study also discovered that some schools particularly some private schools do not accept student-teachers for internship programme even though many of the trainee-teachers end up with them after graduation. This finding constitutes a source of discouragement to would-be practitioners of the teaching profession as well as a threat to quality in the teaching profession. This finding corroborates the report of Eya (2002) that poor motivation of teachers and would-be teachers in the country by successive governments has taken its toll on the teaching profession as many practitioners and those coming in are low-spirited, discouraged and poorly motivated. The finding also agreed with the finding of Nwaokugha (2010) that student-teachers face accommodation problems when posted for teaching practice.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher therefore concludes that teaching practice in tertiary institutions in Rivers State is not well carried out. This is so going by the revelation that an exercise that is meant to take at least six months is being hurriedly carried out within six weeks of two sessions thus, not allowing for thorough exposure and supervision. In addition, some of the vital materials and activities required by student-teachers to experiment with were either not provided or too short a time denied them the opportunity of experimenting and experiencing them thereby being short-changed of the expected knowledge, skills and experiences they need to function effectively and efficiently in their future teaching jobs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- i. Teacher training institutions should extend the duration of teaching practice to one year of primary/secondary academic calendar in order to allow for adequate exposure of students and thorough supervision.
- ii. Since incentives play an important role in motivation, there is therefore urgent need for government to bring to front burner funding of teaching practice particularly incentives provision to students on teaching practice.

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