
Teaching Practice Problems as Perceived by University Faculties of Education Students: A Case Study of Ebonyi State University

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Abstract

The study investigated teaching practice problems as perceived by students of University Faculties of Education: A case study of Ebonyi State University. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and the population was 730 third year undergraduate students of the Faculty of Education for 2009/2010 session who had just finished their teaching practice exercise. A proportionate simple random sampling was used to select 300 students that formed the sample for the study. A researcher developed structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and grand mean. Pearson Product Moment was used to calculate the reliability of the instrument and the value was found to be 0.76 indicating high reliability. The results of data analysis revealed that student lack adequate preparations subjected to a lot of criticisms by their supervisor. It was recommended among other things that students should be exposed to micro-teaching before proceeding to teaching practice exercise.

Teaching practice which is the same thing as with the internship by medical doctors is a period when students of University Faculties of Education are posted to secondary or primary schools to put into practice those aspects of teaching such as principles and methods learnt theoretically in the class. During this period, students are required to practice teaching and it is one of the requirements for the award of the Bachelors Degree(B.Ed) in education. The emphasis on teaching practice is on proper teaching and learning to be strictly supervised by the supervisors who periodically visit

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the students in their schools of practice to make sure they are actually practicing how to teach. This exercise if well organized, coordinated and supervised will give the students enough training that will help them do the actual teaching.

The teaching practice programme evaluates the whole teacher training education which will show whether the programme is successful or not. This is in line with FRN (2004) that stipulated thus; since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. Its failure is to the discredit of the organizing university while its success is also to the credit of the organizing universities that may wish to utilize them at the end of the programme.

Mgbo in Ogwa (2006) asserted that teaching practice affords the student an opportunity of role acquisition. The programme thus reveals the personality of the teacher in training, while pupils benefit from experience of experts from various universities or colleges offering the teaching practice as an exercise which enables the clients to be professional teachers.

Teaching practice according to Lassa (1998) is a means of providing opportunities under typical school conditions in selected co-operating schools for student-teachers to ensure experiences in observing and participating actively in diverse educational activities of teachers in school Ukeje in Lassa (1998) saw teaching practice:

As an opportunity for the would be teacher to put into practice under the watchful eyes of his clinical supervisors, the principles, theories and practices to which he has been exposed in his classroom studies. It is a period of experimentation, consolidation and internalization. It is at this point that practice takes over from theory and it is the dividing line between the professional and the quack or the teacher and the cheater (Lassa, 1998:136).

Teaching practice enables students to develop such attributes like tolerance, sympathy, patience, desire to teach, reliability and tact (Ogwa, 2006). During this period, students are exposed to new environment where they are made to interact with students, teachers, principals, and other non-teaching staff. These people have their varying characters which the student teacher must adapt for cordial relationship necessary for improved teaching and learning process. As they try to adapt to their new environment, they are faced with numerous challenges especially when they are interacting with the staff of their practicing school. Similarly, since the teaching practice exercise comes up simultaneously with their normal lectures, students are bound to encounter some difficulties.

Literature reveals that there are many works on teaching practice which are more of theoretical with little empirical study, hence this study. The focus of this study therefore, is to ascertain the problems encountered by students during teaching practice.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching practice which is one of the requirement for the award of Bachelors Degree (B.Ed) in education is currently being criticized in terms of its mode of operation and methods of teaching. Similarly, the new environment which the students are exposed to is another problem as they find it extremely difficult to adapt. Their difficulty in adapting to their new environment poses a threat to effective teaching and learning thereby making the exercise which is supposed to be enjoyable to become very much boring. Equally, students seem not to be well prepared before the exercise, coupled with the increasing rate of indiscipline among the secondary school students. The resultant effects of all these are poor classroom instruction, poor lesson note writing, and poor performance of both the student teacher and the secondary students leading to questioning of the credibility of the institution that organized the exercise. It is therefore necessary to conduct the present study to ascertain the problems of teaching practice as they are perceived by the students involved.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the problems of teaching practice as perceived by students of Ebonyi State University. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the extent to which of students are prepared before the teaching practice exercise.
2. determine the extent to which they perceive the presence of their supervisor as a threat.
3. ascertain the extent the perceive their school environment as a problem.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do students prepare before teaching practice exercise?
2. To what extent do students perceive the presence of their supervisor as a threat?
3. To what extent do students perceive their school environment as a problem?

Research Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to ascertain problems of teaching practice as perceived by students. The total population of the study was 730 third year students of Ebonyi State University (EBSU) Faculty of Education 2009/2010 session who had just finished their teaching practice (Source: Registry unit, EBSU Faculty Of Education). Proportionate simple random sampling techniques were used to select 300 students from the entire population. Therefore, the sample size was

300 students. The researcher developed structured questionnaire titled “Problems of Teaching Practice as Perceived by Students” (PTPPS). The questionnaire was used in collecting data for the study. A 4-point rating scale was used to rate the responses and the following values were assigned to the responses: Very High Extent (VHE) 4 points, High Extent (HE) 3 points, low Extent (LE) 2 points and Very low Extent (VLE) 1 point.

The instrument was validated by two experts in Educational Administration and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation all from Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University. To determine the reliability of the study, Pearson Product Moment was used to calculate the reliability coefficient of the instrument and the value was found to be 0.75.

The research questions were answered using mean, stand deviation and grand mean. The decision rule was that any mean from 2.5 and above were regarded as “Very High Extent while any mean less than 2.50 was regarded as Very low Extent”.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent do students prepare before teaching practice exercise?

Table 1: Mean Scores of Students on the Extent of their Preparation before Teaching Practice Exercise

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Students are properly inducted on writing lesson note.	2.1	0.12	Low Extent
2	Orientation exercise is normally organized for students before teaching practice.	2.4	0.14	Low Extent
3	Faculty Management seeks the opinion of students on schools to be posted.	3.3	0.19	Very High Extent
4	Students provide teaching materials before they proceed to teaching practice.	2.2	0.04	Low Extent
5	Sometimes, students are exposed to micro-teaching before the actual teaching practice.	1.6	0.03	Very Low Extent
Grand Mean		2.32		Low Extent

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Data in table 1 Shows that student teachers opinions are sought to a very great extent by the Faculty Management before posting them as revealed by item 3, while items 1,2,4 and 5 indicate their preparedness to be of a very low extent. The grand mean of 2.32 implies that student teachers do not prepare to a high extent before proceeding to teaching practice.

Research Question 2

To what extent do student teachers perceive the presence of their supervisor as a threat?

Table 2: Mean Scores of Student Teacher’s Perception on the Presence of His Supervisor as a Threat

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	I Fidget when my supervisor is in the classroom.	3.3	0.19	VHE
2	I Sometimes engage in a hot argument with my supervisor because of my inability to use instructional materials.	2.8	0.06	HE
3	My supervisor comes when I do not expect.	3.1	0.05	VHE
4	My supervisor spots out the dull students and asks them questions.	1.8	0.11	VLE
5	My supervisor corrects my mistakes before the students.	3.2	0.04	VHE
6	He criticizes my inability to teach for forty-five minutes.	2.5	0.05	HE
7	Sometimes my supervisor asks me a thought-provoking question before the students to discover my inefficiencies.	1.6	0.29	LE
8	I naturally do not like my supervisor.	3.3	0.04	VHE
9	My supervisor complains bitterly of my poor classroom management.	1.7	0.03	VLE
10	My supervisor finds it difficult to have a post discussion on my performance.	1.9	0.34	VLE
Grand Mean		2.52		LE

Data in table 2 Shows that student teachers perceive the presence of their supervisor as threat to a very high extent as indicated in items 1,2,3,5,6 and 8 while their perception of their supervisor is to a very low extent as indicated by items 4,7,9 and 10. The grand mean which is 2.52 implies that student teachers perceive the presence of their supervisor to a very high extent as a threat. This means that the presence of the supervisor is a threat to the students.

Research Question 3

To what extent do students perceive their school environment as a problem?

Table 3: Mean Scores of Students' Perception of their School Environment as a Problem

S/N	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	The principal was strict in checking my attendance.	3.4	0.06	VHE
2	The class teacher criticize my method of teaching.	3.5	0.06	VHE
3	I was assigned to teach a subject that is outside my area of specialization.	3.4	0.06	VHE
4	I found it difficult to conduct morning assembly.	1.7	0.09	VLE
5	Sometimes I was asked to check late comers who are sometimes aggressive.	3.5	0.06	VHE
Grand Mean		3.1		VHE

Data in table 3 Shows that students perceive their school environment to a very low extent as a problem as indicated in item 4, while they perceive it to a very high extent as a problem as indicated in items 1,2,3 and 5. The grand mean which is 3.1 implies that students perceive their school environment as a problem to a very high extent.

Discussion

The study revealed that undergraduate students on teaching practice in Ebonyi State University lack adequate preparation before they proceed on teaching practice. For instance, they are not usually inducted very well in writing lesson note and are not also exposed to micro-teaching before the actual teaching practice. However, findings showed that faculty management seeks the opinions of students on schools they are to be posted.

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Similarly, students are seriously criticized by their supervisors, the class teachers and the principals on their method of teaching. At times they are criticized of poor classroom management, inability to teach for a minimum of forty-five minutes, and are blamed for asking questions to only the clever ones on the pretext that they teach very well. This is in agreement with Mkpa (1984) who asserted that student teachers are exposed to criticism on lesson preparation and questioning techniques during their methodology lessons in the classroom.

Equally, the study revealed that another area of difficulty as perceived by the student teacher is on the school environment. It was observed that principals were always strict in checking the attendances of students; students were assigned to teach the subjects outside their areas of specialization and were sometimes asked to track down students who were late to school. Some of these students reacted aggressively often times.

Conclusion

This study has been able to ascertain the areas of difficulties of student teachers during the teaching practice exercise organized by Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University. The findings portrayed the faults of both the faculty management that organizes the teaching practice exercise and lapses of principal, teachers and the student teachers themselves. However, there are some areas of commendations, but efforts should be made for proper and meaningful teaching practice exercise in the faculty as failure of the exercise will be detrimental to the education sector.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Faculty of Education Management should always and properly expose students to micro-teaching before they proceed to the actual teaching practice.
2. Students should be taught properly on how to write lesson notes.
3. Proper orientation on all aspects of teaching practice should be organized for the student teachers.
4. Supervisors should always establish cordial relationship with student teachers for effective classroom management and instruction.
5. Supervisors should have post supervision discussion with the student teachers to find out areas of weakness and possible correction for enhanced performance.
6. Principals should equally organize a mini orientation for the student teachers before engaging them in the teaching exercise. This will enable the student teachers adapt to their quickly to their new environment.

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