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**CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICE AMONG
STUDENT-TEACHERS IN TEACHER-EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN
SOUTH-EAST OF NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Teacher education is highly indispensable for a nation that wants rapid development and progress. Quality is very important in teacher education to ensure sustainable National development. No nation can develop above the quality of its teachers. Hence, the need to identify the challenges of effective teaching practice in Nigeria. Moreover to examine how these challenges hinder effective teaching practice exercise and proffer solutions to tackle them using the south east geographical zone of Nigeria as a focal point. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted. The study population consisted of all the student-teachers in the teacher education institutions in Nigeria using south-east geographical zone as a focal point. The sample for

this study was made up of 800 student-teachers selected through proportionate random sampling technique from 10 teacher education institutions in south-East, Nigeria. Data were collected with a researchers-developed questionnaire titled “Challenges of Effective Teaching Practice Exercise in Nigeria Questionnaire” (CETPENQ). Mean ratings was used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that inadequate time, poor attitude to teaching and lack of commitment to teaching practice are the challenges facing effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria. There was conclusion and recommendations were made based on findings.

Introduction

Philosophy of Education has to do with the study of the purposes, processes, nature and ideals of education. According to Onebunne (2018) philosophy of Education deals with the guidelines, policies and ideas that are used to monitor the ways schools should be managed. It is therefore, pertinent to construct an effective philosophy of education to enhance a sustainable national development. Any nation that wishes to rise above the ambit of poverty must regard the education of her teachers as a priority. Excellent educational policies are meaningless without corresponding excellent teachers (Ogbuagu, 2021). Hence, there is need to train teachers that are knowledgeable, effective, progressive, competent, efficient for National development. Teacher education is that aspect of education which produces teachers through professional training. The importance of teacher education lies on the fact that the prepared or professional teacher shows mastery of subject-matter, skills, methods, creative ingenuity, abilities and competencies.

Teacher education has been part of the national policy since 1981. Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) emphasize the goals of teacher education as follows:

- a) Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- b) Encourage further the spirit of inquiring and creativity in teachers.
- c) Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to the national goals.
- d) Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.
- e) Enhance teacher’s commitment to the teaching profession.

A teacher ought to be properly trained in theory and practice. As teaching is a vocation, he or she must be in the field to translate the theories into practice, to see the challenges facing the teacher and be able to acclimatize with them. These are what the teaching practice exercise is set to achieve.

Teaching practice is a field experience course in teacher education program. It is an important exercise that provide the would-be teachers a good ground to acquire the

practical aspect of the trainings they received in school. It opens and widens their horizons about what goes on in the classroom.

According to Achuonye (2018) teaching practice is a component of teacher education program in which teacher trainees have the opportunity to put into practice all the teaching and classroom management theories they have acquired during the course of their studies with a view to attaining professional competencies. Teaching practice brings the teacher trainees face to face with the reality of what happens in the actual sense of teaching and learning. Thus, teaching practice as a professional development exercise help student teachers to bridge the gap between educational theories and practice. Hence, through this exercise, a gap between the school where the teachers are trained and the classroom where they are expected to transfer what they have learnt, is filled.

Ogunbameru and Raymond (2012) view teaching practice as a pre-service teachers' professional development course of field experience. It affords the student teachers opportunity to put into practice in actual classroom setting, theories and concepts learnt as curriculum contents in their academic program. Teaching practice is an important exercise in teachers' education training. It is a compulsory practice for every student in colleges of education and university undergraduates who are pursuing courses in education. It lasts between three to six months of intensive practice in different secondary and primary schools. Despite the importance of teaching practice in education and development, it seems challenged with some problems. It is against this background that the present study is carried out to find challenges to effective practice among student-teachers and to proffer solutions.

Statement of the Problem

Excellent educational policies are meaningless without corresponding excellent teachers. Teaching practice is an age-long field experience in the teacher education institutions of Nigeria. It is observed that some student teachers are incompetent after graduation. They tend to regard teaching practice as essentially an evaluative program. They are therefore mainly interested in the evaluation and grading aspect of teaching practice exercise. Hence, they put up a good performance in the presence of the supervisor to obtain good grades while the reverse is the case after graduation. This poses a problem which led the researchers to delve into the challenges of effective teaching practice in Nigeria. Moreover, to examine how these challenges hinder effective teaching practice exercise and proffer solutions to tackle them for better practices.

Research Questions

1. What are the challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria?
2. How do these challenges hinder effective teaching practice exercise of student-teachers?
3. How do we tackle these challenges for better result?

Method

The study investigated the challenges to effective teaching practice among student-teachers in teacher-education institutions in South east of Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, which sought to collect data on the opinions of the respondents (Student-teachers) with the view to identifying the challenges hindering effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria using south east as a focal point. Akuezuilo and Agu (2003) describe a survey research as the collection of data from a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. The study population consisted of all the student-teachers in the teacher education institutions in South-east of Nigeria.

The sample for this study was made up of 800 student-teachers selected through proportionate random sampling techniques from teacher-education institutions in various states in South east Nigeria viz; Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Federal College of Education (T) Umunze, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State College of Education (T) Enugu, Imo State University Owerri, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri, Abia State University Uturu, Abia State College of Education (T) Afikpo, Ebonyi State University Abakiliki and Ebonyi State College of Education Ikwo. According to Nworgu (2015), Proportionate random sampling technique involve stratifying the population in terms of one or more variables of interest to the researcher and elements would be drawn from each stratum in such a way that the relative proportions of the strata in the resultant samples are as the same as in the parent population.

A researcher's self-developed questionnaire titled: "Challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria questionnaire" (CETPENQ) containing 15 items was used for the study. A 4 - point scale of strongly Agree - SA (4), Agree - A (3), Disagree - D (2), Strongly Disagree - SD (1) was used to collect data for the study.

The instrument was validated by three experts. The corrections and modifications made by these experts on the instrument were incorporated in the final correction of the instrument. Reliability of the instrument was established using 30 student-teachers from teacher education institutions outside South east of Nigeria. Scores after administering the instrument and collation yielded a coefficient "r" value of 0.88 using the Cronbach Alpha statistical method.

The research questions were answered using mean. The decision rule is that any mean score from 2.50 and above was taken as Agree (A) while mean scores below 2.50 was taken as Disagree (D).

Results

Research Question One: What are the challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean rating of respondents on what constitutes challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria.

N = 800 student - teachers

S/N	Questionnaire Items	x Mean	Decision
1	Lack of adequate time for the teaching practice exercise.	3.04	Agree
2	Last option of studying education as a course.	3.96	Agree
3	Contemporary bias that studying education as a course is for academically poor students	4.00	Agree
4	Adoption of certification method as the most important way of assessment.	3.30	Agree
5	Lack of commitment to the teaching practice exercise by the student-teachers.	3.88	Agree

Results in Table 1 showed that all the items have mean ratings above the cut-off point of 2.50. The table also showed that items 2, 3, 5 were responded in agreement with the statements. Items 1 and 4 were responded positively in agreement. Hence, they agreed that items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 constitute the challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria.

Research Question Two: How do these challenges hinder effective teaching practice exercise of student-teachers?

Table 2: Mean rating of respondents on how do these challenges hinder effective teaching practice exercise of student-teachers.

N = 800 Student-teachers

S/N	Questionnaire Items	x Mean	Decision
6	It brings about poor teaching performance of the student-teacher.	3.26	Agree
7	It slows down the teaching and learning process.	1.98	Disagree
8	It brings about poor commitment to the exercise.	3.80	Agree
9	It limits good relationship with the professional teachers.	3.88	Agree
10	It gives room to doing everything just for good grades.	3.82	Agree

Results in Table 2 revealed that only the mean rating of item 7 was below 2.50. This indicates that student-teachers disagreed on the fact that challenges of effective teaching practice slow down the teaching and learning process. Other items have mean ratings above 2.50 showing the respondents agreement that items 6, 8, 9, and 10 are the challenges that hinder effective teaching practice exercise of student-teachers.

Research Question Three: How do we tackle these challenges for better practices?

Table 3: Mean rating of respondents on how do we tackle these challenges for better practices

N = 800 Student-teachers

S/N	Questionnaire Items	x Mean	Decision
11	Extending the period of teaching practice exercise.	3.32	Agree
12	Students should be advised to study their course of interest.	4.00	Agree
13	Government at all levels should create interest to the teaching profession through remunerations.	3.82	Agree
14	Assessment in teaching practice should be based on competency and skill.	3.96	Agree
15	Scoring of teaching practice exercise should be done by practicing school and the supervisor.	3.36	Agree

In the results as shown in Table 3, all the items have mean rating above 2.50 indicating that strategies stated in the items should be used to tackle those challenges hindering effective teaching practice in Nigeria for better result.

Discussion

According to the response of research question one, student-teachers agreed that there are challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria. For the respondents to support the stated challenges showed that they are aware of, and appreciate the existence of challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria. The finding agreed with the views of Ngada (2001) and Osokoya (2012) on the existence of challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria. Indeed, lack of adequate time, studying the course education as the last option, contemporary bias that studying education as a course is for academically poor students, Adoption of certification method as the most important way of assessment and lack of commitment of the student-teachers constitute the challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria.

In research question two, student-teachers disagreed that challenges of effective teaching practice exercise slows down the teaching and learning process. They however agreed that it brings about poor teaching performance of the student-teacher, his or her poor commitment to the exercise, limits his or her good relationship with the professional teachers and everything is done just for good grades. This finding suggests that in order to achieve effectiveness in teaching practice exercise in Nigeria, how these challenges hinder effective teaching practice exercise must be analyzed and their implications revealed. This is in line with the view of Achuonye (2018) who stated that analysis of teaching practice exercise and its challenges paves way for educational development. Hence, it is through this analysis that solutions are offered to the challenges of effective teaching practice exercise of student-teachers.

The responses to Research Question three revealed that student-teachers agree on the strategies for tackling the challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria such as, extending the period of teaching practice exercise, advising students to study their course of interest, Government at all level creating interest in teaching profession through

remunerations, assessment in teaching practice should be based on competency and skill, scoring of teaching practice exercise should be done by practicing school and the supervisor. This finding should be implemented because teaching profession does not command the prestige it ought to. Teacher education is seen as a course for losers or unambitious people. Nevertheless, teachers are the hub on which the wheels of education revolve. National Policy on Education (2013) stated that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Hence, effective teaching practice exercise becomes imperative for sustainable National development.

Conclusion

The findings of this study call for serious actions for educational policy makers and Education Stakeholders. The importance of quality in teacher education cannot be over-emphasized. Teachers' education is very unique in manpower development of every nation. No nation can develop above the quality of its teachers. Teaching practice exercise is the hallmark of teacher education. There are challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria. Unless the strategies for tackling these challenges are adopted and implemented, effectiveness in teaching practice exercise in Nigeria may not be achieved. Therefore, managers of teacher education institutions in Nigeria should adopt and implement the above-mentioned strategies for tackling challenges of effective teaching practice exercise in Nigeria as philosophers of education see them as ideals for education.

Recommendations

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

1. The period of the teaching practice exercise should be extended from one term to a whole academic year.
2. Students should be advised to study their course of interest.
3. JAMB cut off mark for teachers should not be graded below those of other professional bodies.
4. Government at all levels should enhance interest in the teaching profession through remunerations.
5. Assessment in teaching practice should be based on competency and skill.
6. Scoring of teaching practice exercise should be done by practicing school and the supervisor.

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