

Influence of Teaching Practice Exercise on Pre-service Teachers' Professional Development

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Abstract: *The study investigated the influence of teaching practice exercise on pre-service teachers' professional development with regards to sustaining quality assurance of teacher education. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. A sample of 420 pre-service teachers from Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri Imo State, were selected for the study through stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was researchers made 4-point likert type questionnaire titled "Teaching Practice Exercise and Teachers' Professional Development (TPETPD)". It had reliability coefficient of 0.79 determined using cronbach's alpha formula. The data generated was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while the hypotheses were tested using chi-square(χ^2) and t-test statistical tools at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study revealed that teaching practice is very essential in pre-service teachers' professional development irrespective of gender. Based on the result, it was recommended that pre-service teachers should take their teaching practice exercise serious to enable them function properly during their teaching profession*

Keywords: *Pre-service teachers, Teaching Practice, professional development, Quality teacher education*

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I. Introduction

Teaching is the process of transmitting knowledge which involves the teacher and learner. It is the process of attending to people's needs, experiences and feelings, and making specific interventions to help them learn a particularly thing.

In teacher education programmes, a lot of time is devoted to the 'what' of teaching, what resources we do need, the 'how' of teaching, how to structure a lesson, manage classes and assess learning. According to UNESCO (2005), teacher education addresses environment, social and economic content to create locally relevant and culturally appropriate teacher education. Perraton (2007) indicated that teacher education generally includes four elements: improving the educational background of the trainee teachers; increasing their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are to teach; pedagogy and understanding of children and learning; and the development of practical skills and competences. The development of practical skills and competences by the trainee or pre-service teachers is done through their involvement in teaching practice exercise.

Teaching practice is very important in pre-service teacher education. A good outing during teaching practice exercise of pre-service teachers is a pointer towards future success in the teaching profession. According to Maduabum and Abah (2004) in Uwameiye and Ogunbameru (2012), teaching practice is a component of teacher education programme 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 attain professional competence. Olaitan and Ausiobo in Nakpodia (2011) indicated that practice teaching is the phase of the pre-service education of teachers in which the student-teacher is given an opportunity to bring together educational theory and actual teaching procedures under competent supervision. De-ville (2010) stated that teaching practice is an internship experience, a part of formative training process for pre-service teachers in skills exploration and enhancement. Akbar (2002) noted earlier that the term practice teaching embraces all the learning experiences of student teachers in schools. According to Teacher Training Regulation (2012) in Asta, Jolanta and Marijona (2015), teaching practice is such a period of studies when the initial professional steps are made, when the attitude towards teacher's activity, right, obligations and responsibilities is shaped. It is the educational space where the quality of competencies acquired during the study is revealed. Teaching practice help pre-service teachers acquire professional competencies and experience

necessary for practical activity. Teaching practice is a period when pre-service teachers are exposed to classroom situation to transform theoretical aspect of their programme into practical. During the teaching practice process, pre-service teachers learn to implement what they have learned at the faculty under the supervision of mentors. It is clear that individuals learn through experience in combination with careful preparation, good mentoring discussions with colleagues and well-designed courses, but not from experience alone (Basturk, 2016). De-Ville (2010) stated that teaching practice affords the trainees the opportunities to make personal observations of teaching and learning, formulate hypothesis, test their hypothesis and form their own theories of teaching and learning. Teaching practice is a means of effecting necessary emotional and professional changes in student teachers because as a learning method, it is experiential as students live through it.

Alkan and Demirhan (2005) in Basturk (2016) indicated that, the general purpose of the teaching practice courses is to contribute to pre-service teachers' professional development by providing them, within the framework of the faculty and school cooperation, the opportunity to transform their content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and general cultural knowledge obtained from the faculty into practice. Teaching practice exposes pre-service teachers to new perspectives as well as prepares them in knowledge and skills. It equips them with knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge or knowledge of how to teach (Wilke, 2004). Teaching practice offers the practicing students an opportunity to engage in profitable experiences in observing, sharing, participating and in teaching with the supervision of more experienced teachers (Cohen & Manion in Nakpodia, 2011). With teaching practice, the pre-service teacher understands the rudiments of teaching which includes; use of teaching materials, methods of teaching, lesson planning, classroom management confidence and composure while in the classroom. Uwameiye and Ogunbameru (2012)citing other reports indicated that teaching practice;

1. Provides the time and avenue for student teachers to acquire competences that are required in their teaching professional development (Ehianetalor, 1990).
2. Brings student teachers into a programme of cooperation and interactive guidance by experienced teaches (Young & Edwards, 2006).
3. Affords student teachers the opportunity to reflect on their own actions in the classroom and to acquire valuable skills, knowledge and attitude which are required in management of student learning experiences in the classroom (Imogie, 1990).
4. Enhances pre-service teachers' conceptualization of themselves as teachers.

NCCE (2012) stipulated that teaching practice should last for a full semester duration which should run at a stretch from the beginning of NCE III 1st semester to the end while NUC-BMAS (2007) stipulates one semester for teaching practice however, most teacher education institutions allow it to run for 6 weeks of two blocks during the four-year programme. One in year three and one in year four within these periods the students are supervised by competent hands in the area of general education and specialization. These are all geared towards attaining quality assurance of teacher education.

Stoller (2003) defined quality assurance as the degree to which an item or process meet or exceed the users requirement. It means the planned and systematic actions necessary to provide the confidence that a faculty system or component will perform satisfactorily and safely in a service (Chesapeake, 2004). Nwizu (2011) stated that quality assurance in education refers to actions that educational institutions undertake to ensure that they provide required standard of education in order to provide quality manpower for National development.

The quest for quality teacher educations has left the teacher training institutions with the burden of producing pre-service teachers who are competent in handling the teaching profession. Guarino, Santibanez and Daley (2006) indicated that less well prepared teachers have more classroom difficulties and are rated less effective by evaluators and colleagues. Therefore an education system that aims to offer a quality education for all its citizens should be able to rely on teachers who are well prepared, competent and committed. Milanowski (2004) noted that the strongest predictor of student achievement is quality of teaching. Quality of teaching makes a difference in students' learning gains. Darling-Hammond (2005) also indicated that in order to improve quality of education delivered to students one should be able to produce quality teachers. Farrel (1995) in a study concluded that the number of years of a teachers' schooling are generally positively correlated with student's performance. Also, another study showed that teacher training had a significant impact on teachers' classroom behaviours this being positively correlated with students' achievement (Reina & Suleman, 2010). Therefore teaching practice is expected to develop pre-service teaches capability in the field of teaching.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching profession in recent time has been flooded with non trained personnel who entered into the field as a result of unemployment by-passing the process of professional development in the teaching field. This

has taken its toll on the quality of teachers and students outcome. Reina and Suleman (2010) pointed out that many candidates who enter into teaching profession have low academic qualifications necessary for entrance and are unlikely to have secured grounding on core subjects.

This study was carried out to determine the influence of teaching practice exercise on pre-service teachers' professional development.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to identify the influence of teaching practice exercise on pre-service teachers' professional development. Specifically, the study will determine:

- ❖ Pre-service teachers' perceptions towards the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education.
- ❖ Whether NCE and Degree pre-service teachers will differ in their perceptions towards the influence of teaching practice exercise and their professional development in teacher education.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study;

1. What is the perception of pre-service teachers towards the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education?
2. What is the difference between the response mean of NCE and Degree pre-service teachers towards the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions towards teaching practice exercise and their professional development in teacher education.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the response mean of NCE and Degree pre-service teachers' perceptions of the influence of teaching practice exercise and their professional development in teacher education.

II. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted to investigate pre-service teachers' perception towards the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education. The population of the study consists of all final year pre-service teachers (NCE and Degree) of Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State. A sample of four hundred and twenty (420) final year pre-service teachers was selected for the study through stratified random sampling technique. This consisted of one hundred and twenty (120) NCE and three hundred (300) Degree pre-service teachers. The instrument for data collection was a 4-point likert type questionnaire titled "Teaching Practice Exercise and Teachers' Professional Development (TPETPD)". It ranged from Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 pts, Agree (A) = 3 pts, Disagree (D) = 2 pts and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 pt. The instrument was divided into two parts; part A dealt with respondents demographic variables while part B dealt with items related to the objectives of the study. The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained by two teacher educationists and a measurement and evaluation expert from the institution, their inputs guided the restructuring of the instrument. To determine reliability of the instrument, it was administered to 35 pre-service teachers outside the study group but with the same characteristics and experience in teaching practice exercise. The data generated was subjected to analysis using Cronbach's alpha formula which gave a reliability coefficient of 0.79 which was considered adequate for the study. The instrument was administered on face-to-face basis by the researchers. The respondents were briefed on the objectives of the study and assured that the information supplied will serve for research purpose only. They were allowed to fill out the instrument and return on the spot and all the copies of the instrument given out were retrieved. The data generated was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while the hypotheses were tested using chi-square (χ^2) and t-test statistical tools at 0.05 level of significance.

III. Result

Research Question 1: What is the perception of pre-service teachers towards the influence of teaching practice exercise and their professional development in teacher education?

Table 1: Summary of Pre-service teachers' responses

S/N	Teaching Practice and professional development	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	It enabled me understand how to prepare lesson plan	3.36	0.65	Accept
2.	It enabled me have self confidence in effective lesson delivery	3.23	0.67	..
3.	I gained skills on effective classroom management	3.08	0.71	..
4.	It enabled me to learn how to prepare lesson notes	3.25	0.66	..
5.	I gained skills on step-by-step presentation of lessons	3.15	0.65	..
6.	I understood how to manage school records	3.10	0.78	..
7.	It enabled me understand how to select instructional materials	3.32	0.71	..
8.	It enabled me understand how to select teaching methods.	3.30	0.65	..
9.	It enhanced my skills in time management	2.91	0.92	..
10.	I understood the process of teaching practice through my school mentor.	2.85	1.08	..
11.	I gained the skill of assessing students performance	3.08	0.73	..
12.	It enabled me understand how to prepare teaching aids.	3.28	0.69	..
13.	It enabled me know how to behave towards students	2.76	1.12	..
14.	It enabled me to transform theory into practice	2.72	1.12	..
15.	Teaching practice enhanced my professional competence	2.93	0.96	..
Grand Mean = 3.09		3.09	0.81	

Table 1, shows that all the items were accepted as they had mean response greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Also, the grand mean of 3.09 with SD=0.81 is greater than the criterion mean. This implies a positive perception of pre-service teachers towards attaining quality assurance of teacher education through teaching practice exercise

Research Question 2: What is the difference between the response mean of NCE and Degree pre-service teachers' perceptions towards the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education?

Table 2: Summary of response between degree and NCE pre-service teachers

Programme	N	Mean	SD	Diff. in Mean Resp.
Degree	300	2.95	0.93	
NCE	120	3.25	0.67	0.55

Table 2 shows that NCE pre-service teachers had mean response of 3.25 with SD = 0.67 while their degree counterparts had mean response of 2.95 with SD = 0.93, these gave a difference of 0.55 in favour of the NCE pre-service teachers.

Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions of the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education.

Table 3: Summary of Chi-Square (χ^2) analysis

No. of Rows	No. of Column	df	X ² - _{cal}	X ² - _{.05}	P value	Decision
15	14	42	251.362	62.213	0.000	S

Table 3 shows that the calculated chi-square(χ^2) value 62.213 is greater than the critical value of 3.64 also $P < 0.05$. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative accepted at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between pre-service teachers' perception of the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education.

H0₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of

NCE and Degree pre-service teachers' perceptions of the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis

Programme	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t _{0.05}	p-value	Decision
Degree	300	2.95	0.93					
NCE	120	3.25	0.67	418	6.548	1.69	0.000	S

Table 4 shows that t-calculated value of 6.548 is greater than the critical value 1.69 also $p < 0.05$. Based on the result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative accepted at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant difference between the mean response of degree and NCE pre-service teachers' perceptions towards the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education.

IV. Discussion

The result of the study revealed that pre-service teachers have high positive perceptions towards the influence of teaching practice exercise on their professional development in teacher education. This is an indication that teaching practice exercise is very important in teacher professional development as it enabled the pre-service teachers to understand how to write lesson plan, apply different methods of teaching, manage time properly, know how to handle students, prepare and use appropriate teaching aids, learn how to manage school records and so on. Further statistical analysis indicated that there is a significant relationship between teaching practice and attaining quality assurance in teacher education. This result is consistent with Wilke (2004), Uwameiye and Ogumbameru (2012), Rena and Suleman (2010) and De-ville (2010) as earlier reviewed.

Finally, the study revealed that NCE pre-service teachers gained more from teaching practice exercise than their Degree counterpart and as a result they had higher positive perception than their degree counterparts. This is suspected to be as a result of the length of time spent on teaching practice by the NCE pre-service teachers which in turn placed them at a higher advantage; this result is in agreement with Tarrel (1995) as earlier indicated.

V. Conclusion

The result of the study has revealed that, teaching practice exercise enhances professional development of pre-service teachers and will lead to production of competent teachers which is a basic need to sustaining quality assurance in teacher education.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the result of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Pre-service teachers should be made to take teaching practice exercise serious during their training programme proper and in-depth supervision.
2. The government and curriculum planners should increase the time for teaching practice to a full session to enable pre-service teachers be grounded in the field.
3. Only competent hands should be allowed by teacher training institutions to supervise pre-service teachers on teaching practice.

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