

CHALLENGES FACING STUDENT-TEACHERS DURING TEACHING PRACTICE EXERCISE IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL), UMUNZE

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Abstract:

The purpose of the study is to identify the challenges facing student teachers of Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze during teaching practice exercise. In the pursuit of the objective of this study, four research questions were formulated by the researcher as guide to the study. Survey design was adopted for the study and the population consisted of 339 respondents from 3rd years in five schools in the degree unit of Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze. A structured questionnaire which consisted of 31 items in five sections was used in eliciting information from the respondents. The data collected from the investigation were organized in tables analyzed using the mean rating of 3.5 and above as accepted while mean rating below 3.5 regarded as rejected. The result of data analysis of the study revealed some challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise which includes classroom management, environmental challenges, curriculum development and instruction and supervisory challenges. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made: Proper attention should be given to the class management in order to achieve the specific objective, students teachers should be provided with lodging accommodation by the practicing school, competent and dedicated supervisors should be used in teaching practice supervision, adequate curriculum guidelines, facilities, reference materials like textbooks etc. should be made available, students should be sent to high quality schools with enabling learning environment.

Key words: Teaching practice, Curriculum, Teaching, Learning, Supervision and Classroom management.

Introduction

Teacher education is an important aspect of our educational system. It involves the preparation of teachers who are responsible for transforming our educational theories and policies into practice.

The National Policy on Education (2004) highlights the purpose of teacher education to include producing highly efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system. For teachers to teach competently and efficiently, they must be adequately exposed to both the academic (theoretical) and practical aspects of teaching.

Teaching today is an invaluable asset to the society. Teaching is a process through which a teacher applies his/her knowledge of the learners, subject matter and methodology to help an individual learn. According to Ogunmosunle in Agusiobo and Udegbe (2002) teaching is the use of educational knowledge, methods and space to educate whoever desires to be educated. It involves direct contact between the teacher and the learner. It is a complex variety of mutual activities undertaken by both of them (the teacher and the learner) in order to promote learning.

According to Okorie (1997) the professional education of teachers cannot be validated without adequate preparation of prospective teachers for dynamic roles in today schools through practice. The practical phase of teacher preparation commonly referred to as teaching practice is a crucial aspect of teacher preparatory programme in teacher training institutions in general such as school of education in colleges of education and faculties of education in Nigerian Universities.

Teaching practice is a period of time during which a student teacher is assigned to a specific institution; primary or secondary school for a supervised teaching as one of the requirements for

graduation and effective teaching experience. Okorie in Agusiobo and Udegbe (2002) defined teaching practice as a period that enables student teachers to learn about the actual work of the teacher in the classroom as well as out-of-class experience.

Teaching practice provides the laboratory where a student practicalizes what he/she had learnt concerning effective teaching. Student's teaching practice is an important factor in preparing students for future teaching assignments. According to National Teacher Institution, teaching practice manual (2005), the general objectives of teaching practice are to enable the student teachers;

- a. Gain general experience-academic professional, social and physical related to teaching profession.
- b. Acquire a wealth of practical experience from all staff they are likely to be in contact with through active participation in the school assigned responsibilities.
- c. Bring the student teachers into direct contact with such significant issues as the functions and responsibilities of various categories of school, staff academic and non-academic.
- d. Develop competence in proper lesson preparation delivery and assessment.

To achieve the above objectives, the student teacher is usually required to undergo a twelve weeks teaching practice to enable him/her acquire the expected skills which will position him/her as a competent professional teacher.

During this period, the student teacher may be face with some challenges which include classroom management, attitude of the supervisors towards the student teachers, curriculum development, instruction and environmental challenges.

Learning environment according to Maduewesi (1990) include the classroom surroundings, physical facilities in the classroom and teacher- student relationship. Physical environment comprises all those equipment, materials, furniture and learning space that make up the place where learners learn. When all these things are made available to the student teachers, they will be motivated to carry out the task assigned to them and the aim of teaching practice will be achieved

Supervisor is described as college representative (trained teacher) who is responsible for coordinating the student teachers while teaching. He is also seen as somebody who guides and coordinates the activities of teachers and other school personnel towards the realization of educational objectives. He mediates between people and school programmes in order to ensure that the processes of teaching and learning are improved (Ogunsaju, 1983).

Supervision is an essential activity that exists to help teachers do a better job. Supervision is very important factor in teacher preparation because they help in the improvement of teaching and learning processes. During teaching practice exercise, the attitude of supervisors toward the student teachers can improve the ability and competence in the student teacher or it can mar the objective of the exercise. When the student teacher is not properly supervised the whole exercise will be unproductive. The supervision of student teaching practice should be regular. The supervisor should be qualified and experienced so that he will be able to render to the student teachers the desired help they need from him/her.

Curriculum can be viewed as the organized knowledge presented to learners in a school. It is the overall plan for instruction adopted by a school system. This includes the subject matter to be learned, the students, the teachers and the physical environments. It encompasses all the courses or subjects to be studied in the schools with all the class activities and some extra curriculum activities that the school offers to their students. It covers all the ideas, knowledge, values and principles that the nation wishes to impart to their citizens. The curriculum is usually planned at

various levels by different people in order to contribute effectively to the achievement of educational goals.

Curriculum development is the process of implementing the theoretical plan to attain educational ends. It involves the analysis of the purpose of education, the designing of programme, implementation of a series of related experiences and evaluation of the whole process. Saylor et al (1981) see curriculum development as frequently used to describe the creation of curriculum materials, including materials for use by students that are products of curriculum planning but not in themselves curriculum plan. In other words curriculum development is the actual carrying out of the plans including modifications where necessary.

Instructions are all the activities engaged in by the teacher with the aim of facilitating change in the learners' behaviour. It can be defined as the planned interaction between the learner and the learning activities. It is through this interaction that learning occurs. The student teachers should employ various strategies and materials to bring out the desired learning from their students. Such strategies may include lecturing, discussion and demonstration. The instructional materials may include textbooks, pictures, objects and laboratory. Student teachers use these materials to carry out the task assigned to them so that there will be effective learning.

Statement of the Problem

The fallen standard of education in Nigeria has reached an alarming stage yet education is the bedrock of development. Iniobong (2008) opined that the future of any nation depends on the quality of her teachers. The National Policy on Education (2004) stated that no educational system can rise above the level of its teaching staff. This shows the role of the teachers and the teacher education programmes in national development. With the introduction of Universal Basic Education, (UBE) in 1976, only well trained teachers can successfully translate the objective of UBE to reality.

Teaching practice is one of the most important aspects of teachers training programme in Nigeria aimed at exposing the student teachers to the field to carry out the theoretical knowledge and experience into practice in real classroom situation under the supervision of a sound teacher. In some cases, the objective of teaching practice may not be fully realized, this is because, most student teachers after their student teaching experiences or even after their graduation from college, still lack the required and necessary skills for which they were sent on teaching practice.

The inability to fully realize the objectives of teaching practice or the inability of student teachers to perform to expectation can be attributed to certain challenges or inadequacies of the programme. The challenges that face student teachers during teaching practice is what necessitates the need for the study and hence the problem of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out the challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the classroom management challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise.
2. Find out the environmental challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise.
3. Find out the curriculum development and instruction challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise.
4. Find out the supervisory challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise.

Significance of the Study

The following people, organizations and establishment will benefit from the findings of this study. Student teachers, teachers in primary and secondary schools, colleges of education and universities, supervisors of teaching practice, government and future researchers.

Student teachers are the main benefactors of the findings in the sense that the study will acquaint them with the challenges of the programme and the role they can play to surmount the challenges. This will help them to be better graduates that are well equipped with what it takes to face the realities of teaching.

It will enable our colleges and universities to equip their students with the rudiments of teaching before sending them to teaching practice. It will also help to devise means of removing the problems and thus modify the programme. The removal of these hindrances will also make for more effective organization and implementation of the programme.

The supervisors of teaching practice and the cooperating school teachers will through the findings acquaint themselves with the best and effective measures to adopt in helping the student teachers to realize or achieve the objectives of teaching practice.

Future researchers will benefit from these findings because the study will be as a reference for their research in the near future.

Finally the findings of this study will benefit the general public because education is the key to building a society.

Scope of the Study

The study was delimited to Year 3 degree students of Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze who have just finished teaching practice programme. The study specifically focused on the challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise.

Research Questions

The following research questions are developed to guide the study,

1. What are the challenges of classroom management faced by student teachers during teacher practice exercise?
2. What are the environmental challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice exercise?
3. What are the curriculum developments and instruction challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice exercise?
4. What are the supervisory challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice exercise?

Objectives of Teaching Practice

Akbar(2002) stated that the aim of teaching practice is to help students develop the competencies, personal characteristics, understanding, knowledge and skills needed in profession. In specific terms according to him, teaching practice was designed to achieve the following objectives;

1. To provide an opportunity to liaise with school environment. Its functioning and with community and resources.
2. To provide for the exchange of ideas and methods between practicing school and teacher training institution by teacher training institutions staff and students, perceiving new ideas

material and equipment in use in practicing schools and introducing new ideas, materials and equipment into the school.

1. To provide the prospective teacher with an opportunity of establishing an appropriate teacher/ pupil relationship.
2. To provide an opportunity for evaluating the student potential as a teacher and suitability for the teaching profession.
3. To develop personal relationship with others, administrators, teachers, parents and students.
4. To provide the future teachers with practical experience in school to overcome the problem of discipline and enable him/her to develop method of control.
5. To provide with an opportunity to put theories into practice and to develop a deeper understand of educational principles and their implication for learning.
6. To enable the student teachers effectively plan and prepare lesson.
7. To develop skills in the use of fundamental procedures, techniques and methods of teaching.
8. To develop desirable professional interest, attitudes and ideas relative to teaching practice.
9. To enable student teachers to acquire desirable characteristics traits of a teacher and to display appropriate behavior.
10. To provide student teachers with an opportunity to have teaching evaluated and opportunity to gain from the benefits of constructive criticism.
11. To provide an opportunity for self-evaluation and to discover own strength and weaknesses.

The Student Teacher roles in Teaching Practice

Okorie (2009) outlined some conditions the student teacher should bear in mind when he/she is sent to a school on teaching practice in order to perform well. The condition includes;

1. His/her mode of behavior should reflect upon the institution that sent him/her as well as upon the students.
2. He/she should know that he/she is at the school temporarily as a guest to train and to become an effective teacher.
3. He/she should co-operate with the class teacher in order to ensure his success and understanding of the class.
4. He/she should observe Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meeting.
5. He/she should be able to evaluate his own learning and that of his pupils/ student
6. The student teacher should be able to participate intelligently in matters affecting contemporary education programmes.
7. The student teacher should participate in staff meeting.

The Supervising Teacher

The supervising teacher has various responsibilities and roles in the teaching practice. Ali(2005). Enumerated some of the responsibilities to include;

1. Selecting student teaching centers.
2. Assigning student teachers to schools and supervisory teachers
3. Liaising between the colleges and co-operating school.
4. Assisting the student teacher in developing his student teacher programme, deciding on objectives, time table, scheme of work, unit plans, lesson plans, evaluation techniques and instructional materials.
5. Supervising the co-operating teacher and
6. Evaluating the student teaching practice.

Research Methodology

The procedure used in carrying out this study includes; Research design, Area of study, Population of the study, Sample and sampling technique, Instrument for data collection, Validation of the instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Design

The research design adopted for the study was a survey design. A survey design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data for only a few people or few items considered to be representing the entire group (Nworgu, 1991).

Area of Study

The study was carried out in the five schools of Education in the degree unit, Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

Table: 1 The population of the study comprised all the third year (3rd) degree students of Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze. The data was represented thus,

Schools	No of students
Education.	117
Business Education.	96
Science Education	84
Home Economics Education	4
Industrial Technology Education	38
TOTAL	339

Source: Teaching Practice Unit Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by researcher. The questionnaire has two sections A&B. Section A of the questionnaire dealt with the personal data of the respondents while section B was in four clusters organized in line with the research questions. The items on the questionnaire were responded on a 5 point scale ranging from strongly agree of 5 points to strongly disagree of 1 point.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally administered three hundred and thirty nine questionnaires to the respondents in the different schools of Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze and collected back all on the spot.

Method of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using means in order to determine the degree of agreement or disagreement in each of the items; values were assigned to the rating scales as follows;

Strongly Agree	- 5 points
Agree	- 4 points
Undecided	-3 points
Disagree	-2 points
Strongly disagree	- 1 points

The mean (\bar{X}) was used in analyzing each questionnaire items.

The formula for the mean is as follows.

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum Fx}{N}$$

Where,

\bar{X} = mean

Σ = summation

F = frequency

X = Nominal value

N = Number of responses

$$\text{Mean } (\bar{X}) = \frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5} = \frac{15}{5} = 3.00$$

Since the five point rating scale was used for the instruments, the decision rule was based on the mean 3.00. An interval scale of 0.5 was added to the mean of the nominal value thus $3.00 + 0.5 = 3.5$; hence item with mean response of 3.5 and above was regarded as accepted while any mean below 3.5 was regarded as rejected.

Presentation of Results

The data are presented in tables and analyzed in accordance with the research questions.

Research Question I

What are the challenges of classroom management facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise?

Table 2

Mean response of student teachers on the challenges of classroom management facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise.

S/ N	ITMS STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	N	X	REMAR KS
1	Poor arrangement of the sitting position of pupils/ students.	109	88	60	40	42	339	3.54	Accepted
2	Controlling pupil's movement in and out of the class.	119	98	60	34	28	339	3.73	Accepted
3	Controlling noise making.	107	90	72	34	36	339	3.58	Accepted
4	Set inducing students.	120	97	80	25	17	339	3.82	Accepted
5	Improvisation in teaching.	122	101	79	20	17	339	3.86	Accepted
6	Writing on the chalkboard.	92	76	42	69	60	339	3.21	Rejected
								.3.62	

From table 2: The table reveals that items 1,2,3,4,5 respectively were accepted upon by the respondents because these items receive the mean of 3.5 above which is within the acceptance range and item 6 was rejected by the respondents.

Apart from item 6 all other items have mean of 3.5 and above which shows that respondents accepted that these items contributes challenges to the classroom management during teaching practice exercise.

Research Question II

What are the environmental challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise?

Table 3:**Mean responses of student teachers on the environmental challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise.**

S/N	ITEMS STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	N	X	REMARK
7	Inability of student teachers to conform to rules of the school of practice.	60	67	4 4	90	78	33 9	2.83	Rejected
8	Lack of accommodation for the student teacher.	150	101	1 9	30	39	33 9	3.87	Accepted
9	Lack of tables for the student teachers.	142	109	1 0	37	41	33 9	3.81	Accepted
10	Lack of chairs for the student teachers.	141	101	1 9	35	43	33 9	3.77	Accepted
11	Non co-operative attitude of the regular teachers with student teachers.	141	96	2 0	45	37	33 9	3.76	Accepted
12	Non involvement of student teachers in extra – curricular activities.	62	60	3 0	10 1	86	33 9	2.74	Rejected
13	Overcrowded classrooms.	116	1 0 1	82	2 2	18	3 3 9	3 . 8 1	Accepted
14	Poorly equipped libraries.	170	1 2 0	10	2 0	19	3 3 9	3 . 9 1	Accepted
15	Poorly equipped laboratories.	165	1 2 4	15	2 1	14	3 3 9	3 . 9 1	Accepted
								3 . 8 2	

From table 3

The table reveals that items 7 and 12 had mean ratings of 2.8 and 2.7 which is below 3.5 and were rejected. Then items 8,9,10,11,13,14 and 15 were above 3.5 and were accepted. The general mean score is 3.8 this shows that they are accepted in the sense that they are among the challenges the student teachers encounter during teaching practice. It also shows that the student teachers are not provided with the necessary facilities and comfortable environment to work on.

Research Question III

What are the curriculum developments and instruction challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise?

Table 4:

Mean responses of student teachers on the curriculum development and instruction challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise.

S/ N	ITEMS STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	N	X	REMARK	
16	Inability of student teachers to master the subject matter.	120	90	15	40	74	339	3.57	Accepted	
17	Inability of the student teachers to utilize instructional materials properly.	109	92	36	50	52	339	3.46	Rejected	
18	Inability of the student teachers to apply appropriate teaching skills.	126	56	15	58	84	339	3.24	Rejected	
19	Non availability of relevant textbooks.	120	111	25	43	40	339	3.67	Accepted	
20	Non availability of curriculum guidelines.	98	120	20	53	48	339	3.49	Rejected	
21	Writing of lesson notes.	40	40	29	111	119	339	2.32	Rejected	
22	Giving of written exercise	90	101	27		63	58	339	3.30	Rejected
23	Marking student exercise	129	102	20		48	40	339	3.68	Accepted
24	Inability of student teachers to improvise instructional material.	107	102	27		59	44	339	3.50	Accepted
25	Nervousness.	121	97	16		55	50	339	3.54	Accepted
								3.37		

The table above represents the mean of responses of the respondents on the curriculum development and instruction challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise. So far items in 16, 19, 23, 24, and 25 mean ratings were above 3.5 and were accepted while items 17, 18, 20, 21, 22 mean ratings were below 3.5 and were rejected.

Research Question IV

What are supervisory challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise?

Table 5:
Mean responses of student teachers on the supervisory challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise.

S/ N	ITEMS STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	N	X	REMARK
26	The supervisors spent only few minutes in your class.	20	21	15	120	163	339	1.93	Rejected
27	Supervisors impatience to go through the lesson notes	70	81	50	61	77	339	3.02	Rejected
28	Lack of cordial relationship between the supervisor and the student teachers.	144	91	42	30	32	339	3.84	Accepted
29	Non co-operative attitude of the regular teachers with student teachers.	130	101	21	44	43	339	3.68	Accepted
30	Lack of feedback from supervisors on students' performance to enable them take corrections.	150	101	19	39	30	339	3.89	Accepted
31	No supervision by some supervisors.	12	10	19	150	150	339	1.77	Rejected
								3.02	

The table above represents the mean of responses of the respondents on the supervisory challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise. So far items in 28, 29 and 30 mean ratings were above 3.5 and were accepted while items in 26, 27 and 31 mean ratings were below 3.5 and were rejected.

Summary of Findings

After the presentation and analysis of the above data on the challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice exercise, the following findings were made.

1. Classroom management poses challenges to the student teachers. Controlling of noise making, pupils movement in and out of the class, improvisation in teaching constitute to challenges student teachers faces during teaching practice.
2. Inadequate accommodation for student teachers in the staff room, poorly equipped libraries and laboratories, non co-operative attitude of the regular teachers are not in line with Akbar (2002) who suggested that student teachers should be provided with things that will enable them participate as members of staff during the practice exercise.
3. Curriculum development and instruction pose a challenge to student teachers in the sense that the curriculum- guidelines are inadequate, non availability of relevant textbooks, inability of student teachers to improvise instructional materials also constitute a challenge.
4. Despite the fact that supervisors visits the student teachers in their practicing school, some of them (Supervisors) lack cordial relationship with the student teachers and does not give them feedback on their performance to enable them take corrections.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analysis of data, some findings were made. These findings were discussed appropriately.

Research question (one), sought to find out the challenges of classroom management facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise. The findings from the study were in consonance with Akubue (1991) who asserted that classroom management aims at encouraging and establishing student self-control through a process of promoting positive student achievement and behaviour. Table three revealed that classroom management challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice include controlling pupils' movement in and out of the classroom making, improper use of chalkboard, lack of improvisation by teachers, poor arrangement of sitting position and inability to set induce the students while teaching.

Research question (two) sought to find out the environmental challenges facing student teachers during teaching practice exercise. It was discovered from the study that lack of accommodation, tables and chairs, non-co-operative attitude of the regular teachers, overcrowded classroom, poorly equipped libraries and laboratories pose a big challenge to student teachers. This is in consonance with Maduewesi (1990) who stated that learning environment should be made conducive in terms of provision of good classroom, learning equipment and facilities etc for effective teaching and learning.

From the findings on research question (three), it was observed that the relevant textbooks needed for effective teaching and learning were not available, Student teachers were unable to master the subject matter and marking of students exercises were difficult as a result of overcrowded classroom. .

From the analysis of research question (four), the researcher discovered that there is lack of cordial relationship between the supervisor and the student teachers. The findings also agreed with the inability of the supervisor to give feedback to the student teachers on their performance to enable them take corrections, this is in contrast to the words of Acheson and Gall (2003) who stressed that supervision should not be an autocratic exercise but collaborative and interactive

Implications of the Study

Teachers play key roles in instructional process in schools. Teachers are the main determinants of quality in the schools. Okafor (1991) explained that the best way to produce competent teachers is through avenues of professional training.

The study has some implication towards effective education teachers in Nigeria. Some of the implication of this study is that when student teachers are uncomfortable they will not put in their best during teaching practice exercise.

There is the possibility that the fund put into this exercise is wasted because the student teachers may not improve for the simple fact that their problems remain unsolved. Moreso, the standard of education of our country and her economy may be affected as a nation with half baked teachers.

Conclusion:

The study confirms that within the student teaching practice experience, student teachers encounter difficulties that result to problems associated with the classroom management, conducive environment, curriculum- development and instruction and supervision.

Classroom management represents one of the major challenges identified by student teachers during their teaching practice experience. Classroom management is challenging for student teachers due to the difficulty providing realistic situation in the educational studies classroom prior to student teaching. Contributing to this are classroom dynamics that vary widely depending on the level of the classes, the time of day and the students. This approach provides a practical approach that still falls short of simulating the experience but exposes student to real-life situations, expectations and strategies in regard to dealing with classroom management.

Student teachers are expected to get the supervisors feedback to enable them take corrections and make amends. The attainment of quality education will be a mirage without adequate preparation of manpower that will dispense the knowledge. This calls for serious consideration of stipulated strategies to be adopted in tackling the challenges which student teachers face.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. Proper attention should be given to the classroom management by the student teachers in order to achieve the specific objective at the end of the lesson in the classroom.
2. The Student teachers should be provided with lodging accommodation by the practicing schools.
3. Adequate curriculum guidelines, facilities, reference materials like textbooks etc should be made available to facilitate effective and efficient teaching and learning.
4. Competent and dedicated supervisors should be used in teaching practice supervision.
5. There is need for the government to provide good library facilities and laboratories.
6. Students' teachers should be sent to high quality schools with enabling learning environment.

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