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Adedayo Julius Olugbenga

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Perception of Students towards Participation in Teaching Practice Exercise in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti

Adedayo Julius Olugbenga

Department of Curriculum Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti

Email: j.oludayo@yahoo.com

Abstract

The relevance of teaching practice exercise in the training of would be teacher is germane. However, the perception of the students about this important exercise in their training seems not impressive. This paper was therefore designed to investigate the perception of students towards teaching practice exercise in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The study was an empirical research based on descriptive research design. The sample for the study consisted of 1200 students in the Faculty of Education of the university, who were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. A questionnaire was used to gather information for the study. Two research questions were generated while three hypotheses were formulated. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics of mean and percentages while the hypotheses were tested through an inferential statistics of t-test at 0.05 significance level. The result of findings showed that most of the students are not favourably disposed to teaching practice exercise. However, 400 level students fare better in terms of positive perception about teaching practice exercise. Recommendations were proffered on ways to adequately induct the students on the relevance of teaching practice exercise to their training.

Keywords: Teaching Practice, Perception, Student, Training.

Introduction

Teaching practice exercise is a central issue on the training of would be professional teachers. Any ideal profession requires some characteristic traits and qualities that must be satisfied for it to be so regarded. Teaching is widely recognized as one of the major professions world over. Thus, there is much need for it to meet up with the basic requirements of a profession. Apart from the provision of social services, possession of professional ethics and practice autonomy, the training of intending professionals both in theoretical and practical skills are crucial. This is intended to expose the students to the needed practical aspect of their chosen career. The prospective professional teachers are thereby acquitted with the basic tools to cope with the challenges of their career.

Teaching is an age long profession, and as such the commonest of all. Teaching is a process of impacting knowledge into the students by someone regarded to be more knowledgeable i.e. the teacher. Many notions are conceived by people of teaching or what it involves to teach. The commonest is that a teacher standing in front of some learners in the classroom, holding writing materials (chalk or board marker) and presenting some learning tasks to them (Seweje, 2010). However, Butts (1973) viewed teaching in three ways:

- i. Teaching could be what is taught as a doctrine or body of knowledge, such as the teachings of the church, which could otherwise be referred to as a body of ideas or system of belief.
- ii. Teaching could also mean an occupation or a profession, which one engages in for a living.
- iii. Teaching could as well refer to process of making things known to others or sharing with them in an organized school.

From these perspectives of Butts (1973), it can be inferred that teaching is a profession that provides a special service for a set of people. The major focus of any teaching encounter is impartation of knowledge and skills capable of developing the learners to become a functional member of his/her society. This aligns with the view of Oyekan (2000) that teaching is an all-purpose profession engaged in human resource development for individual and economic growth. It thus becomes imperative that prospective teachers be exposed to programme that would inculcate in them desirable teaching traits and competence.

Ogbazi in Jegede (2009) noted that one of the problems of industrial development in Nigeria is that of inadequacy of sufficiently trained human resources. These much needed human resources were enumerated by Jegede (2009) to include (not exhausted) qualified teachers, technicians and workshop attendants and felt that there should be joint involvement between the institutions and the industrial world to produce skilled graduates that would adequately serve the society. Okorie (2001) as well agreed that students are expected to be exposed to some relevant activities during their training that will provide them with the desired practice skills. Teaching practice exercise is an effective means of helping pre-service teachers learn about and reflect upon effective teaching practice. It provides a link between theory and practice. This agrees with the opinion of Ehien (1991) that

work experience develops confidence and personality as well as increases awareness of one's responsibility as a youth in the community by getting involved in actual work situation ... assists the students to have insight into the stress and tension that may be experienced in the transition from school to work.

The institution that produces teachers who would be able to meet up with the challenges of the society must ensure that the students are well trained and groomed as to the technical know-how of the professional they are entering into. From the discourse, the inclusion of teaching practice exercise in the training of prospective teachers is justified.

The importance of practicing teaching prior entrance into the profession can not be over emphasized. It prepares the students ahead and build in them self confidence on the job. The comparison study of self-efficacy between practicing and student teachers conducted by Rebecca & Emma (2003) revealed that working teachers feel more prepared to teach and confident in their abilities than the student teachers. It was also noticed that teachers' confidence improves as they begin full-time teaching. It may be assumed that the improvement in teacher's self-efficacy is due to the notion that confidence develops through experience (Martin, Linfoot &

Stephenson, 1999). Self-efficacy theory, according to Bandura (1986), states that enactive or real experiences are more effective than vicarious experiences in building a realistic sense of self-efficacy. An individual's confidence is strongly influenced by experiences, whereby self-efficacy will increase or decrease depending upon the nature of the experience. In this regard, student teachers are expected to develop skills and confidence from their teacher training experiences, especially during teaching practice exercise.

Teaching Practice and Teachers' Education

It has been noted from recent literature that there are demands for the development and investigation of pedagogical approaches and experiences appropriate for enhancing learning in teachers education course work (Njoku, 2008). If prospective teachers are to awaken to their responsibility and be able to face the challenges ahead of them on the job, then, it is imperative that these future teachers are engaged with those experiences that would arouse their interest and challenge their curiosity about teaching and learning. The relevance of teacher education in this regard is germane. Perhaps, that is why Ogunojemite (2010) submitted that the importance teacher education (among others) is to provide functional education and training for the learners within and outside the school settings. It is the training outside the school that is referred to as teaching practice.

Teaching practice is a period when pre-service teachers are on apprenticeship and have the opportunity to enter the classroom to practice the skills they have learnt. It is an internship period during which various pedagogical theoretical skills are applied into practical situation. It gives the student teachers opportunity to face real life experience of their training. They interact directly with the students, learning materials and the school environment. This avails the pre-service teachers the opportunity to gain more experiences and skills and to acquire new idea, techniques, strategies and methodologies in the actual classroom situation and art of teaching generally.

The purpose of teaching practice is to produce effective, successful and meaningful teachers that would subsequently produce successful citizens in future. The teaching practice provides opportunities for the students to develop on himself professional competences, knowledge, understanding, skills and personal characteristics and values in pedagogy. However, Nweke in Oyinloye (2010) summarized the objectives of teaching practice as:

- i. provision of opportunities to put theory into practice;
- ii. giving practical experience, opportunities and facilities for self confidence and expertise;
- iii. provision of ability to organize, control and manage classroom with due disciplinary measures; and
- iv. development of an integrational and mutual sense of co-operation as well as interchange of ideas and attitudes.

Teaching Practice Exercise at Ekiti State University

The period of learning to practice a skill is very important to any discipline that is professionally inclined. It is imperative that those aspiring to enter into such profession are well prepared before they can be inducted or allowed to join the profession. This explains the inclusion of teaching

practice exercise in the training of prospective professional teachers in the faculty of Education, Ekiti State University.

Each student partakes in this exercise twice before graduation. First time runs for six weeks after second semester of 200L while the second time is also six weeks after second semester of 300L. During these periods, the student teacher is expected to work under a professional teacher who oversees the activities of the student in training. The teacher is expected to guide the student teacher in all the areas of pedagogical skills desired of a professional teacher, marks his/her notes of lesson and give constructive criticisms, monitor his/her teachings and correct appropriately and offer professional advice as the need may arise. The students' lecturers do supervise their students while on teaching practice exercise. Most of the students often felt that the presence of their lecturers was to criticize and molest them, and thus, felt threatened when their lecturers come around. However, this was not the motive of the lecturers' visitation. Rather, it was meant to help, direct and guide the activities of the student teachers so as to facilitate their professional growth and at the same time, serves as an examination aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the students for the purpose of grading them for certification. The scores of the supervisor are used to compute the results of each student.

Students' Preparation for Teaching Practice Exercise

The success of any activity of man depends (majorly) on the level of preparation. The preparation stage is when all necessary materials and resources that would be involved to bring forth satisfactory results are expected to be adequately considered and well taken care of. Scholars had linked perceived preparedness to development of self-efficacy. Housego (1990) believed that teachers who felt ill-prepared to teach may have their success in maintaining an effective learning environment compromised. Lewin, Nelson, & Tollefson (1983) demonstrated that teachers who had formal instruction during their preparation as student teachers had improved their ability to perform effectively. Thus, the preparation of students for teaching practice is the responsibility of both the teacher educators and that of the pre-service teacher. The teacher educators have the duty of making adequate arrangement in terms of learning contents, methodology and evaluation in the preparation of their students for such a programme. The students must be adequately exposed to courses that will enhance their performances on the field. Much as professional preparation on the part of the educators is crucial in developing competent teachers, the attitude of the students at adequately preparing themselves ready for the tasks ahead is germane. The students must be readily prepared towards teaching practice exercise which is a major aspect of their professional training. They need to submit themselves for the training and guidance of their educators and as well personally prepare to undertake the exercise.

Statement of The Problem

The relevance of teaching practice exercise in the training of would be teacher is germane. However, the perception of the students about this important exercise in their training seems not impressive. Their attitude to the exercise is at variance to the objective for which it was designed. They tend to show lukewarm attitude to the exercise, thus undertaking it with levity. Their actions and inactions during the period of teaching practice exercise seemed to be a kind

of uncooperating and unserious one. This invariably would affect the proper implementation of the programme and accounts for the poor quality of teachers in our secondary schools today. This paper was therefore designed to investigate the perception of students about teaching practice exercise in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti (EKSU).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include to:

- i. find out the perception of students towards teaching practice exercise in EKSU.
- ii. examine the disposition of students to teaching practice exercise in EKSU.
- iii. find out the level of preparedness of students for teaching practice exercise in EKSU.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study. These are:

Q1: What is the perception of students towards teaching practice exercise in EKSU?

Q2: Do students prepare well ahead for teaching practice exercise in EKSU?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the purpose of the study, the research hypotheses generated are:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the perception of 300L and 400L students to teaching practice exercise.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the perception of regular and sandwich students to teaching practice exercise.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students to teaching practice exercise.

Methodology

The study was an empirical research based on descriptive research design. The sample for the study consisted of 1200 students in the Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. They were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Stratified sampling technique was used to select sample according to students' level, programme and gender. However, respondents from each stratum were randomly picked. A questionnaire was used to gather information for the study. The instrument has two sections 1 and 2. Section 1 requested for information on bio data of the respondent while section 2 contains 10 items relating to the perception of students on teaching practice exercise. The researchers personally administered the instrument which was filled and collected immediately. The sandwich students responded to the questionnaire during their 2012 contact session while it was administered a week after on the regular students on their resumption for second semester, 2012. The questionnaire requested the respondents to answer "YES" or "NO" on the items as applicable to them.

The instrument was scrutinized for face, contents and construct validities by an expert each in Test and Measurement and Science Education from the university. Based on their criticism, amendments and suggestions, the final instrument emerged for the study. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through split-half method and the result showed a reliability

coefficient of 0.75, a value considered reasonably high enough to make the instrument reliable to be used for the study.

The data collected through the questionnaire were subjected to statistical analysis. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics of mean and percentages while the hypotheses were tested through an inferential statistics of t-test at 0.05 significance level.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Q1: What is the perception of students towards teaching practice exercise in EKSU?

Table 1: Percentile distribution on students' disposition to teaching practice exercise

S/N	ITEM	YES		NO	
		N	%	N	%
1	I love teaching practice exercise	276	23.00	924	77.00
2	I was happy when we were informed of the commencement of the teaching practice exercise	510	42.50	590	57.50
3	I was eager to get to my school of teaching practice exercise	542	45.17	658	54.83
4	I consider teaching practice exercise as part of my training for life career	1025	85.42	175	14.58
5	I enjoyed my period of teaching practice exercise	464	38.67	736	61.33
	Average		46.95		53.05

From table 1 above, the disposition of the students to teaching practice exercise is not favourable, as a high percentage of them (77%) do not love the exercise and 57.50% were not happy to go for the exercise. However, a good percentage of them (85.42%) agreed that teaching practice is part of their professional training. On the average, the positive disposition of the students to teaching practice is 46.95% which is lower than that of negative disposition which is 53.05%. This means that the students are not favourably disposed to teaching practice exercise.

Q2: Do students prepare well ahead for teaching practice exercise in EKSU?

Table 2: Percentile distribution on students' preparedness for teaching practice exercise

S/N	ITEM	YES		NO	
		N	%	N	%
1	I heard of teaching practice exercise before I was told in the class	886	73.83	314	26.17
2	I was readily prepared towards the teaching practice exercise	351	29.25	849	70.75
3	I have appropriate textbooks to use for the teaching practice exercise	508	42.33	692	57.67
4	I have adequate instructional materials for the teaching practice exercise	203	16.92	997	83.08
5	I had savings towards my teaching practice exercise	447	37.25	753	37.25
	Average		39.92		60.08

The table 2 above showed that the most of the students (73.83%) heard of teaching practice exercise before being told in the class, 29.25% were readily prepared, 42.33% had appropriate textbooks to use while only 16.92% had adequate instructional materials for the teaching practice exercise. On the average, the percentage of the students' preparation for teaching practice exercise (39.92%) is lower than that of negative disposition (60.08%). This implies that the students do not prepare well for the exercise.

Testing Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of 300L and 400L students to teaching practice exercise.

Table 3: Perception of 300L and 400L students to teaching practice exercise

Source of Variation	N	Mean	SD	df	tcal.	tcrit.	Remark
300L	570	5.8	1.32	1118	2.14*	1.96	Sig _t
400L	630	7.6	2.48				

p > 0.05

It is evident from table 3 that the tcal. (2.14) is greater than the tcrit. (1.96). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is significant difference in the perception of 300L and 400L students to teaching practice exercise.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the perception of regular and sandwich students to teaching practice exercise.

Table 4: Perception of regular and sandwich students to teaching practice exercise

Source of Variation	N	Mean	SD	df	tcal.	tcrit.	Remark
Regular	450	6.8	1.28	1118	1.54	1.96	NS
Sandwich	750	7.0	1.32				

$p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows that the tcal. (1.54) is less than the tcrit. (1.96). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the perception of regular and sandwich students to teaching practice exercise.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students to teaching practice exercise.

Table 5: Perception of male and female students to teaching practice exercise

Source of Variation	N	Mean	SD	df	tcal.	tcrit.	Remark
Male	468	5.0	1.48	1118	1.37	1.96	NS
Female	732	5.2	1.42				

$p < 0.05$

Table 5 reveals that the tcal. (1.37) is less than the tcrit. (1.96), the null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. It means that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students to teaching practice exercise.

Discussion

The results from these findings showed that 300L students' perception about teaching practice exercise is different from that of 400L students. The mean score of 400L students is 7.6 as against that of 300L students which is 5.8. This shows that 400L students' positive perception of teaching practice is higher than 300L students. This may be due to their experience in the first teaching practice exercise when they were in 300L. This agreed with the view of Martin, et al (1999) that the improvement in teacher's self-efficacy (and perception) is due to the notion that confidence develops through experience.

It was also revealed from this study that both regular and sandwich students have similar perception about teaching practice exercise. The reason for this may be due to the fact that both regular and sandwich students were exposed to the same learning experiences by the same lecturers, irrespective of their programme. Since the average scores of the groups were considered, that is, both 300L and 400L in each of the programmes, the dichotomy observed earlier due to experience of the students in 400L (perhaps) does not manifest here.

The findings of this study further showed that both male and female students perceived teaching practice exercise the same way. This could be adduced that there is no different in the view of male and female students about this exercise. This is in line with the observation of many scholars who attempted to study gender dichotomy in academics. Adedayo, (2008) observed that

students' ability in definitional aspect of Physics is the same, irrespective of their gender differences. Also, Heller and Parsons (1981) found that there is no difference in the feedback obtained from a stimulus given to boys and girls. Perhaps, this accounts for equal perceptions of male and female students to teaching practice exercise.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It can be inferred from this study that the perception of students to teaching practice exercise is negative, irrespective of sex and gender. However, experienced ones fare better in their perception to the exercise. It was therefore recommended that the students should be more orientated as to the relevance of teaching practice exercise to their training as prospective professional teachers. They should be informed the need to change their perception and have positive view of the exercise. It is then they would be able to learn better from the programme and eventually perform optimally in their pedagogical skills on the field.

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