Assessment of Student Teachers’ Experiences during Teaching Practice in Benue State: Implications on their Perception of the Teaching Profession

Gbeyongu Frederick Terkimbi¹, Abdullahi Adebo Odus², and Akaa Charity Wanger³

¹Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria
²College of Education Akwanga, Nasarawa State, Nigeria
³Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria

Abstract: Teacher Education involves the policies and procedures designed to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills they require to teach effectively. Teaching practice (TP) is an integral part in teacher education because it allows student-teachers to apply the theories into practice. Effective preparation of student teachers in practical subjects could help them teach efficiently. The study was guided by three research questions; survey design was adopted for the study with a sample of (170) student teachers. An Instrument tagged Student Teachers Experiences in Teaching Practice Questionnaire (STETPQ) was used to collect data on how student teacher perceived teaching profession during teaching practice and the challenges thereon. The data collected were analyzed using weighted mean, Frequency and percentages respectively. The result indicated that on the overall, student teachers held strong perception of teaching profession in Benue State. Respondents agreed that teaching practice have made them to decide to take to teaching as a profession. Student teachers also faced different challenge ranging from personal preparation, class participation, class room management, instructional and evaluation problems. It was recommended amongst others that a proper orientation for student teachers should be carried out using efficient means of communication like; seminars, workshops, conferences and discussion before they go for teaching practice. This will prepare their mind for the challenges ahead.

Key words: Assessment, Teacher Education, Teaching profession, Teaching Practice, Teaching, Practice Teaching.

I. INTRODUCTION

The major purpose of assessment in teaching practice is to improve the quality of teaching by student teachers as it allows for the identification of those candidates who are doing well and those that need remedial assistance and help to enable student teachers improve their quality of teaching skills and competences. Assessment is seen as the thread that link all the elements in the study package together which begin with the identification of learning goals and ends with a judgment concerning the extent to which those goals have been achieved (Linn and Gronlund 1995; Nouwens and Towers 1997; Angelo 1999).

Lavey and Shriki (2014) defined assessment in educational context as the process in which students’ product, which are result of their knowledge and skills are measured. In teaching practice, assessment ensures that trainee-teachers who enter the teaching practice program exit with the requisite quality of teaching skills and competences. The assessment practices need to be continuous in character which is best achieved through combining lecturer and mentor lesson observation assessment, collegial or peer assessment and self-assessment by trainee-teachers themselves. Continuous assessment is an ongoing process of gathering and interpreting information about students’ learning and how to make decisions about what to teach and how well students have learned. Olatomide and Oluwatosin (2014) provides a more comprehensive overall picture of student’s performance as it monitors and support the learning and teaching process by providing regular feedback to both student teachers and lecturers concerning what a student has learnt towards achieving quality teaching practice (Linn and Gronlund 1995; Luckett and Sutherland in Makoni 2000; Olatomide and Oluwatosin 2014).

Regular assessment can be carried out by colleagues or peers on each other, the student teachers on themselves, lecturers and mentors on the students which resonates well with current global assessment practices in teacher education. Taras (2002) maintained that formative feedback works in a two-way system, however, it does not count as formative feedback unless the student has understood what the purpose of the assessment was, how they are assessed or judged, and how they can use their shortfalls in the future. The regular feedback students receive from constant assessment during their teaching practice enables them to know how they are progressing, identify their weaknesses and how they can improve their teaching skills and competences, hence student assessment ought to take place as often as possible throughout the teaching practice period (Fourie, Oberholzer,and Verster 1996; Ogunniyi 1996; Nouwens and Towers 1997; Luckett and Sutherland in Makoni 2000). Students who receive regular assessment develop confidence and self-esteem which enables them to reflect on their own performance and take self-directed steps to improve their teaching practice and promote continuous self-improvement (Ogunniyi, 1996; Nouwens and Towers 1997).

The main objective of regular assessment is to provide the student teachers with maximum opportunities to learn and to
demonstrate from time to time the knowledge, skills and competences that they would have acquired during their teaching practice period. In this regard, Ndebele (2013) talks of assessment for learning which provides regular timely feedback to students during the course of their learning so that they have opportunities to improve on teacher education.

There is no teacher education programme that can be said to be complete without an effective Student Teaching Practice programme. Although, there is a school of thought, which says that "teachers are born, not trained", the overwhelming view today is that there is a need for professionally trained teachers to teach in our schools. This view was echoed by Nigerian former Minister of Education, Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa who expressed his belief that "a good teacher education programme must seek to assist the individual teacher to grow and develop as a person, provide him with the necessary skills and professional abilities that will help him become an effective teacher".

Student teaching-practice is important because pre-service teachers enter teacher education programmes with different beliefs and values about the profession, this is because they have been students for the majority of their lifetime, some of these student teachers are likely to have misconceptions and wrong perception about teaching profession, some see it as a stepping stone to other more lucrative professions. There are situations where student teachers enter teacher education programmes, probably because they could not get their first choice course at the university. Such students then aim towards just obtaining a first degree and branching off to other programmes or professions of interest after being trained to teach. These beliefs are unlikely to change unless students are offered experiences that “challenge their validity” (Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1987, Marx, 2004). This is to say that teaching-practice experience helps to change student teachers’ misconceptions about teaching and the teaching profession as a whole. From a casual observation, there appears to be a total change in the attitude of student-teachers towards the teaching profession, after interacting with other professional teachers on the job during field experience. The type of teacher education under discussion can only be provided through several strategies, one of which is Student Teaching Practice (STP).

The term Student-teaching Practice is defined differently by many educationists. A few of these definitions are, however, worthy of note. These are:

i. According to Salawu and Adeoye (2008), Student Teaching Practice: .....is a practical teaching activity by which the student-teachers are given an opportunity in actual school situation to demonstrate and improve training in pedagogical skill over a period of time.

ii. Student Teaching Practice is a kind of apprenticeship stage during which the students are sent out to school to gain practical and professional experience by translating all the educational theories they have acquired or learnt during training into practice.

iii. Okonkwo and Osiji (2008) defined Student Teaching Practice and its processes as: A prolonged period of laboratory experience in an actual classroom situation during which the student takes increasing responsibility for his/her preparation as a teacher under the direction of an institution supervisor representing his/her teacher–education centre and cooperating teacher who is responsible for the classroom situation.

iv. Student Teaching Practice is a pre-service professional preparation for interested persons, aspiring to become teachers with a credible vision for sustainable human development (Salawu and Adeoye 2008). All of the foregoing definitions are valid for our purpose in this research work. Whatever definition is given to STP, the most important thing is that it is a professional exercise which is focused on helping the student-teacher to bridge the gap between theory and practice in education. In the process of bridging the gap between educational theories and practice, the student-teacher, through a programme of cooperative and interactive guidance, acquires valuable skills in teaching and the management of teaching etc. from experienced teachers. A meaningful STP embodies both laboratory/clinical (microteaching) and field teaching experiences in actual school classroom situations.

Teaching is an exciting and rewarding activity but its demanding as it practitioners are required to clearly understand what should be done to bring about the most desirable learning in the pupil/students and be highly proficient in the skills necessary to carry out these tasks (Azeem, 2011). Bhargava (2009) argues that teaching process is multitasking, the author noted that teaching demands more genuity from teachers as subjects demand well prepared conscientious teachers of sound knowledge. It is in a bid for teachers to meet the demands of the profession that their training do not only aim at “imparting theoretical but also practical knowledge and skill in teaching different subjects to prospective practicing teachers” (Azeem 2011).

The term practice teaching embraces all the learning experiences of student teachers in schools, it has three major connotations: the practicing of teaching skills and acquisition of the role of a teacher; the whole range of experiences that students go through in schools; and the practical aspects of the course as distinct from theoretical studies (Stones and morris, 1977). Practice teaching is the name of the preparation of student teachers for teaching by practical training. It is the practical use of teaching methods, teaching strategies, teaching principles, teaching techniques and practical training and practice / exercise of different activities of daily school life.
Achieving all these and discharging same affords the student teacher an opportunity to determine whether the appropriate career choice has been made or not. However, despite its importance, Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) noted that teaching practice sometimes becomes a demoralizing and sometimes very frightening experience. It is on this background that this study examines the student teachers’ perspective of teaching practice and its implication on their perception of the teaching profession.

**Statement of the problem**

Teaching Practice is a key component of a teacher training program. It should be the central pivot of the professional training. The best teacher education programs provide many opportunities for students to spend time in real classrooms under the supervision of an experienced mentor. Yet, in many cases support for beginning teachers is often uneven and inadequate. Such a situation may occur when teaching practice runs concurrently with classes in the faculties of education as is the case with the Universities. In such a situation, the competencies the students acquire the quality of supervision and time spent on teaching practice may be limited, thus affecting the quality of teachers being trained. Against this backdrop it is critical to assess student teacher experiences during teaching practice as this has implication on their perception of the teaching profession. Such a study will serve as a basis for improvement.

**Objectives of the study**

1. To measure student teachers perception of teaching as a profession
2. To identify the challenges faced by student teachers on teaching practice.
3. To suggest recommendations as to ways of assisting student teachers to achieve the desired outcomes from the teaching practice in a more comprehensive manner

**Research Questions**

1. What are student teachers perceptions of teaching as a profession during teaching practice?
2. What are the challenges faced by student teachers on teaching practice.
3. What are the recommendations?

**II. METHODOLOGY**

**Design of the Study.**

The design of the study was a descriptive survey which attempts to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of the population.

**Area of the Study**

The study was carried out in Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi.

**Population of Study**

The target population comprised of all the students in 300/400 levels in College of Agricultural and Science Education (2018/2019 session) who were on teaching practice.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Simple balloting was used to choose 170 students, from the 8 Departments/course options in College of Agricultural and Science Education who were on teaching practice.

**Instrument for Data Collection**

The Instrument for data collection was an adopted questionnaire titled student perspective and challenges in teaching questionnaire (SPCTQ) with 56 items, 22 items measuring student teachers perspectives while 34 items collated data on their challenges during teaching practice.

The re-modified likert scale was used and the weightings were:

- Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree = 2,
- Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1.

For research question one while research question two measured challenges of student teachers with frequency and percentages.

**Validation of the Instrument**

The instruments were face validated by three experts in measurement and Evaluation, Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi. All the corrections in terms of content and coverage, ambiguity and relevance were adjusted.

**Reliability of the Instrument**

The instruments were trial-tested on 15 student teachers who were not part of the sample but belong to the population of the study. The reliability index of 0.76 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha technique. This value was deemed appropriate for the instruments to be used for the study.

**Method of Data Collection**

The researcher distributed the questionnaires with the aid of lecturers who supervised students on teaching practice. The questionnaires were retrieved immediately after supervision.

**Method of Data Analysis**

In research question 1, descriptive data analysis (mean and decision) were used to answer the research questions. A mean of 2.50 and above indicates agreement with the item statement while a mean of 2.49 and below indicated disagreement while research question 2 was judged based on the value of frequency and percentages, any frequency measuring above 5 was considered inadequate by student teachers vis-à-vis.

**III. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**Research question 1:** What are student teachers perceptions of teaching as a profession during teaching practice in Benue State (N=170)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teaching Practice has made me to decide whether or not to take to Teaching as a Profession</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teaching Practice helped me apply the Teaching Skills I learnt in Class</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teaching Practice developed in me the interest of Teaching</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teaching Practice has made me to Master Professional Skills</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teaching Practice helped me Acquire Problem-Solving Skills when I met Situations that Differed from what I was Taught in Class</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teaching Practice made me Master my Subject Matter</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I learnt to use a variety of Teaching Methods</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teaching Practice has helped me to Acquire those Valuable Personality Attributes that are Associated with an outstanding Teacher</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Learnt to use a variety of Teaching-Learning Materials</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Improved on my Classroom Management Skills Based on Feedback from my Supervisors</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I took part in giving Tests, Marking and Recording Examinations; this made me love Teaching Profession more</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>Not Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Teaching Practices has enabled Student Teachers to gain General Experience in the Teaching Profession</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I was able to identify Students who have Difficulties and attended to them</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Teaching Practice gave me an Opportunity to Communicate and Interact closely with Learners and Control the Class Effectively</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Teaching Practice gave me an Opportunity to try out Ideas and Theories in a Practical Classroom Situation.</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Teaching Practice has Exposed me to the Problems and Prospects of the Teaching Profession</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Teaching Practice helped me to Broaden my Knowledge of the Subject Matter</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Teaching Practice has made me to Learn how to Plan, Prepare and Present my Lesson Topics Appropriately</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Teaching Practice has helped me to Perfectly use Instructional Materials when Teaching</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Teaching Practice has helped me Learn to use Reinforcement and Assessment Skills Correctly</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Student Teachers see Teaching Practice as a Vital Factor in Preparing them for Future Teaching Assignment</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Teaching Practice has given me the Opportunity to Relate my Studies to my Future Career</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 revealed that student teachers held strong perception of teaching profession in Benue State. Based on the data collected and analyzed, 21 out of 22 questionnaire items have their mean ratings above 2.50 which indicated that respondents agreed that teaching practice have made them to decide to take to teaching as a profession. It helped them to translate teaching theories to practice, develop in them the interest of teaching, it enable them master the various subject matter studied in tertiary institutions. Respondents also maintained that teaching practice provides the opportunity to apply different teaching methods; they confirmed that teaching practice improved their class room management skill, identify students with learning difficulties and gave them the opportunity to try out ideas and theories in a real practical class room situation.

This study reaffirmed the findings of Korass R. (2016) who carried out a similar study and maintained that teaching practice gave student teachers a number of experiences and these experiences have impacted on their perception of teaching profession. The researcher stated that teaching practice has been found to be very beneficial to students' teachers because it provided an opportunity for them to teach and increase their professional competences. They developed interest of teaching and were exposed to the problems and prospects of the teaching profession, they learnt to plan, prepare and present lesson topics appropriately. Teaching practice helped them to acquire those valuable personality attributes that are associated with an outstanding teacher and to perfectly use instructional materials when teaching. In addition, student teachers stated that teaching practice is a vital factor in preparing them for future teaching assignment since it helped them to learn to use reinforcement and assessment skills correctly.

Student teachers also indicated that they gained general experience in the teaching profession and got the opportunity to communicate and interact closely with learners and control the class effectively. Generally the student teachers indicated that they were able to build proper confidence and competence in lesson preparation and developed skills and attitudes of a teacher during the exercise. It was also revealed that teaching practice helps student teachers to learn how to keep records of assignment and also to participate in school activities. They further were able to master professional skills and broaden their knowledge of the subject matter.

Research Question II. What are the challenges faced by student teachers on teaching practice in Benue State (N=170)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>(A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(A) Personal problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poor Diction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Not Creative</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Marital Problems</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table II Section A illustrated student teachers personal problems. It showed that most of the respondents have encountered challenges of not meeting obligations and expectations of the cooperating teachers with 38 or 21.18%, transportation 36 or 21.18%, many were not creative with 33 or 19.41%, while others experienced poor diction with 8 or 4.71%. Other challenges respondents have were clothing and marital issues with frequencies of 7 or 4.11% and 6 or 3.53% respectively. It can be deduced from the responses above that respondent’s personal problems can pose problems of effective class room delivery.

Table II Sections B displays teachers’ preparation problems such as poor command of English with corresponding value of 34 or 20%, inability to respond to students’ questions in the class with frequency of 22 or 12.94%, making mistakes before the students in the class with 21 or 12.35% and inability to properly organize instructional materials with 17 or 10%. Other teacher preparatory problems were the inability to provide variety of activities and lack of strategies with corresponding frequencies of 12 or 7.05% and 25.88% respectively. This indicated that student teachers have inadequacies and short comings in spoken English, comportness, skills in material development and more appreciation in strategizing and providing activities for the learners.

Table II Sections C, indicated class participation problems such as little evidence of teacher-students interaction with 17 or 10%, followed by students’ attentiveness and responsiveness with corresponding value of 11 or 6.49%, and other similar characteristics as presented in the table above. This result showed that student teachers lack class participation skills to enable them improve interactive teaching methods. They also have little knowledge of students’ personal, psychological, effective and cognitive make up.

Table II Sections D, pointed out some class management challenges face by student teachers during teaching practice; it was evident that student teachers needed skills to call her class to order by ensuring students attention during classes was not jeopardized with the highest frequency of 35 or 20.59%. Followed by their inability to independently handle classes without assistance with 11 or 6.47%, late commencement of activities with 5 or 2.94%, ineffective handling of disciplinary issues with 5 or 2.94%, and lastly inadequate preparation with 5 or 2.94%. Based on the result obtained above it can be concluded that student teachers lacks variety of class room management skills ranging from organizing classes, dependency, timing amongst other managerial principles, theories, approaches and practices and if this is not contained...
may have lasting negative effect on student teachers themselves and learners.

Section E presented challenges of instructional delivery. It revealed that individualization of instruction i.e providing activities to meet the needs of slow, average, and fast learners using a variety of materials was a major issue with the value of 53 or 31.18% this was followed by inability of directing appropriate and different types of questions that will enhance students thinking ability with the value of 32 or 18.82%, also preparing visual aid and other instructional materials was a challenge with 30 or 17.65%, this was followed by the inability to select activities to carry out different parts of the lesson with 21 or 12.35%. Others included inability to motivate students during class introduction with 18 or 10.58%. The least challenges encountered by students teachers was identification of teaching techniques to be employed in pacing activities and giving clear direction and logical explanations with 10 or 5.58% and 7 or 4.11% respectively. The data above revealed that majority of student teachers needed more understanding of the principles and methods of teaching to enable them provide activities to meet the needs of slow, average and fast learners with a variety of instructional materials, amongst other challenges. It is crucial that these problems be discussed by school administrators and supervisors to redirect and energize prospective teachers with the right teaching approaches as this would have great impact on the student teachers and learners.

Section F sorted problems of evaluation. Going by the data presented above it could be clearly shown that student teachers needed competencies in constructing appropriate questions for appraising learners understanding of the subject matter with 32 or 18.82%, followed by incompetence in interpreting test results using simple statistics such as mean, median and mode with 20 or 11.76%. Lack of skills in creating strategies that facilitates accurate correction of test papers with 19 or 11.18%. Other challenges needed by student teachers included competencies in choosing appropriate activities for assessing learners and questioning with 15 or 8.82% and 14 or 8.24% respectively. The data obtained indicated that student teachers experience a lot of challenges of evaluating their lesson; this showed that student teachers not the importance of lesson evaluation to learners. These underscore student teachers to be rated as professional teachers after graduation because class evaluation is the fulcrum of an effective teacher. Therefore these prospective teachers should be given opportunities to attend conferences and teacher training programs as this will enrich them with values and respect for the teaching profession.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

From the findings of this study the following conclusions were made:

1. Those student teachers held strong perception of teaching profession in Benue State. Respondents agreed that teaching practice have made them to decide to take to teaching as a profession. It helped them to translate teaching theories to practice, develop in them the interest of teaching, its enable them master the various subject matter studied in Faculties of Education.

2. Student teachers also faced different challenge ranging from personal preparation, class participation, class room management, instructional and evaluation problems.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Stakeholders in teaching practice in colleges of education and universities should Formally induct their student-teachers on the importance of the exercise to teacher education to ensure satisfactory teaching performance of the students.

2. The teaching practice must be thoroughly monitored to ensure total compliance with the principles guiding the exercise.

3. Schools of education and colleges should organize the teaching practice exercise very well so as to give the best professional practice to the trainee teachers.

4. A proper orientation for student teachers should be carried out using efficient means of communication like; seminars, workshops, conferences and discussion before they go for teaching practice. This will prepare their mind for the challenges ahead.

5. The government should provide finance inform of stipend for student teachers so as to boost their up keep and their attitude towards the profession.

REFERENCES


