Influence of Teaching Practice Exercise on Accidental Teacher Education Candidates at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

M A Adeleke, B A Adesina, M. O. Salami, and J. A Adebayo.

Department of Special Education and Curriculum Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Abstract
This paper examines the influence of practice teaching on the attitude and opinion of accidental would-be teachers. It examined how the exercise can improve their attitude and opinion about lesson preparation and delivery as well as general interest in teaching after exposure to the exercise. One hundred and thirty students in this category who have not experienced any formal teaching were purposively selected and made to respond to a questionnaire before and after the exercise. It was found out that the exercise improved the students’ attitude to lesson preparation, changed their opinion of lesson delivery for the better but did not improve their general interest in teaching. The study concludes that teaching practice exercise is a necessary component of teacher education programme that can assist accidental would-be teachers.

Introduction

The National Policy on Education (2004) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria asserted that since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. Teaching Practice is a major component of a teacher education programme.
The crisis in teacher education in Nigeria has been subject of research (Nwagwu, 1998; Okoro, 1998; Riki, 199, Obinaju, 1996; Ejiogu, 1991). These studies have actually focused on the practicing teachers themselves and their attitudes and perceptions toward their job. Imogie (1990) in Ogiegbaen and Uwameiye (2005) were of the opinion that in Nigeria, teacher education has low popularity as a field of study among University Matriculation Examination candidates. For instance, out of 975,060 candidates who sat for the 2002 University Matriculation Examination in Nigeria, Faculties of Agriculture and Education had the least number of applications with 6,494 and 10,784 candidates respectively. Again, 255,651 applications were received for Faculties of Administration while Faculties of Social Sciences received 185,727 applicants. Faculties of Engineering and Medical Sciences received 152,213 and 142,573 applications respectively. The above figures imply that while applications to the Faculties of Administration, Social Sciences, Engineering and Medical Sciences were over subscribed, those for the Faculties of Education were grossly under subscribed. The implication is that faculties with over subscribed applications cannot admit many of their applicants.

The fallout of the identified cases of imbalance in the number of applications received in various disciplines is that many candidates will be admitted into programmes they did not originally apply to study. The Faculty of Education is one of those faculties that receive candidates who did not originally apply for teacher education programme. These candidates can be referred to as accidental teacher candidates. Personal interest plays an important role in attitudes. While it may be true that many secondary school students in Nigeria are desperate to gain admission into higher institutions to earn degrees, there
is no guarantee that teacher education students who did not originally apply for teacher education programme but eventually find themselves in Education as a stepping stone usually have much interest in becoming teachers as students may have in other programmes.

Oh, Ankers, Llamas and Tomoy (2005) investigated the effect of pre-service practice teaching on teachers’ career goals, affective measures and classroom teaching and found out that those who had practice teaching experience had a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than those who did not have student teaching experience. Also, teachers who had practice teaching tended to show a higher level of confidence in their ability to change student learning in positive ways and the amount of direct supervision they received during student teaching was significantly associated with teachers’ desire to remain in teaching. Ejiogu (1991) found that as a result of poor motivational strategies inherent in the teaching profession in Nigeria, most teachers wish to leave the job for greener pastures. Teaching practice helps student teachers to understand the teaching profession better and know some of the things to expect when they become teachers. In other study, Nwagwu (1994), Aghenta(1998) and Edukugho (2003) indicated that very many of student-teachers in Nigeria said they would not like to make teaching a life career even though they were interested in teaching as a profession.

Cegelka and Alvarado (2000) in Oh et al (2005) showed that in special education, teacher interns were more likely to remain in teaching if they had frequent training and support from a mentor. In the same vein, Cohen, Peters and Willis (1976) in Oh et al (2005) found
that teachers’ practice teaching experience affects pre-service teachers’ decision either to join the teaching profession or not.

According to Darden, Scott, Darden and Westfall (2001) many teacher educators believe that pre service teachers begin to develop their values, beliefs and teaching skills during practice teaching. Henry (1989) in Darden et al (2001) suggests that this may be due to the fact that practice teaching gives novice preservice teachers an opportunity to experience an actual teaching setting and the opportunities of one-to-one teaching. Oduolowu (2009) opined that teacher education faces problems in Nigeria as a result of the societal attitude towards teachers. In Nigeria, the teaching profession is not respected. Teachers are no longer valued as those who contribute greatly to national development. The profession is not lucrative as a result of many impediments such as relatively low remuneration and recognition for teachers, cumulative effect of several years of inadequate attention to education and so on. This made some professional teachers unwilling to teach. They prefer to join other professions which are considered, more lucrative. Teaching is then seen as a job that one goes to after several attempts to secure a better job.

Statement of the problem

Teaching is a job that requires commitment, interest and very positive attitude. In Nigeria considerable percentage of teachers are noted for doing the job with very little of these attributes. Training plays major role in one’s handling of the assignments that are attached to the job for which the training was received. With very many would-be teachers
finding themselves in teacher training accidentally, it is not strange to find such individuals practicing the profession with very little commitment when eventually they are employed. Practice teaching is one component of the teacher education programme that should provide the pre-service teachers with the necessary preparation towards the demands of teaching. If after all the practice teaching, there are still cases of practicing teachers not demonstrating positive attitude to the job, one should ask whether or not teaching practice is not actually contributing to developing acceptable attitude towards teaching especially for the accidental teacher candidates.

**Purpose of the Study**

The specific objectives of this study are therefore to compare

(i). the attitude of accidental teacher candidates to lesson preparation before and after teaching practice exercise

(ii). the level of interest in teaching profession of accidental teacher candidates before and after the exercise

(iii). Opinions of the student teachers to lesson delivery before and after teaching practice exercise

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in line with the objectives of this study.
(i). Will the attitude of accidental teachers to lesson preparation change after exposure to teaching practice?

(ii). Will accidental teacher candidates have improved interest in teaching after exposure to practice teaching?

(iii). Will accidental teachers have different opinions on lesson delivery after exposure to practice teaching?

**Methodology**

The study adopted the survey design. One hundred and thirty accidental teacher candidates were purposively selected from a total 620 Part II students of the 2008/2009 academic session who were going on teaching practice for the first time. They were students admitted into the university through the entrance examination without the initial teacher education certificate of the National Certificate of Education (NCE) so that they would not have had any formal experience of teaching and they cut across science, social sciences and the humanities. A questionnaire titled “Student Teachers Attitude to, Opinion on and Interest to Teaching” was used for data collection. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 7.62. The questionnaire was administered twice; shortly before the students went on teaching practice and immediately the exercise ended. The instrument contained items on the attitude of the students to lesson preparation, their interest on teaching as a job and their opinion on lesson delivery with yes/no responses. Data collected were analysed using simple percentages.
Results

Research question #1

Will the attitude of accidental teachers to lesson preparation change after exposure to teaching practice?

Responses of the students to issues of attitude to lesson preparation were compared before and after the teaching practice exercise. Respondents that responded yes to the items were considered. The summary of the responses is as shown in table 1 indicating the number of respondents who agreed to each of the statements.

Table 1: Summary of accidental teacher candidates’ attitude to lesson preparation before and after teaching practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Before TP</th>
<th></th>
<th>After TP</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Writing lesson note should only be made compulsory for weak teachers</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If it is compulsory, lesson note should be for topics that are difficult and not all topics</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There can be general lesson notes written by experts that teachers can be using universally</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Experienced teachers should be exempted from writing lesson note</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I should be able to teach well even without lesson note</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result shown in the Table 1 above revealed that students attitude to lesson preparation improved after exposure to teaching practice. After the exercise, students were of the view that preparing before going to the class to teach was necessary for every teacher regardless of the number of years of experience and the level of brilliance of the teacher and they also saw the need for each teacher to write his/her own lesson note rather than having a pool of notes where teacher can make a choice when to the class to teach. Therefore the attitude of accidental teachers to lesson preparation improved after the teaching practice exercise.

Research question #2

Will accidental teachers have improved interest in teaching after exposure to practice teaching?

This question was raised to find out the general impression of the students about teaching. Table 2 contains the summary of the responses of the students before and after the teaching practice exercise. The frequency represents the number of respondents who agreed to the statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Before TP</th>
<th></th>
<th>After TP</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teaching is not a profession I should have found myself in</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teaching as a job is not enough for one to make independent living in terms of being financially comfortable.</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Influence of Teaching Practice Exercise on Accidental Teacher Education Candidates at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teaching can not attract public recognition</th>
<th>102</th>
<th>78%</th>
<th>74</th>
<th>57%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teaching is a job for lazy people</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teaching does not require any creativity</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This result reveals generally the interest of accidental teachers to teaching was bad both before and after teaching practice. More than 50% of the respondents believed that they should not have come into teaching at all. Equally more that 50% believed that teaching as a job is not enough for one to make independent living in terms of being financially comfortable. Furthermore they believed teaching as a job can not attract public recognition. It is only in the area of whether teaching is for lazy people or not and whether it requires creativity that students’ opinions differ in their responses before and after the exercise. While they opined that it was for lazy people before they went on the exercise, they found that some work was in teaching and that it required some level of creativity contrary to the popular belief that it did not before they started the teaching practice. Interest of the students in teaching did not improve even after the exercise.

**Research Question #3**

Will accidental teachers have different opinions on lesson delivery after exposure to practice teaching?

This question is aimed at examining students’ opinions on the practical aspect of teaching that involves delivering lessons in the class. Summary of the opinions of the students before and after the exercise is in Table 3. The frequency indicates the number of respondents who agreed to each statement

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Table 3: Summary of the opinions of students on lesson delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
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<th>Before TP</th>
<th>After TP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Standing in front of students is the most difficult part of teaching</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A teacher needs to be able to memorize well before going to class</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A teacher should not allow students to ask too many questions in the class so that he/she won’t be asked what cannot be answered</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The teacher needs to be tough in class to maintain authority</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The need for the teacher to complete the given scheme of work is the most important consideration for the teacher</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students showed that their opinion about lesson delivery improved after the teaching practice exercise. They have gained confidence to stand in front of their students; they have seen the need to understand the subject matter rather than memorizing. In addition, they had an improvement in opinion that teachers need not be too tough to be able to maintain discipline and that teacher’s rushing to complete given task is not the most important consideration.

**Discussion**

This survey has found out that exposure to teaching practice in Obafemi Awolowo University produced a change of attitude of the students to lesson preparation before class teaching. It also showed that their opinion on the actual classroom lesson delivery...
also changed positively after the teaching practice exercise. However, negative interest of the candidates in teaching did not change even after the exercise. Previous studies have identified similar situations as the ones presented in this study. For instance, Darden, Scott, Darden and Westfall (2001) assert that many teacher educators believe that pre-service teachers begin to develop their values, beliefs and teaching skills during practice teaching. Attitude is an issue that is central to practice; as such teachers' demonstration of appropriate skills in lesson preparation is significantly influenced by the attitude to lesson preparation. Many practicing teachers do not have many problems with lesson preparation; it is not strange therefore that practice teaching is an avenue for teachers to assume leadership role and encourage the students' teachers in acquiring the skills and spirit of lesson note preparation.

Student teachers' changed opinion about lesson preparation can also be traced to earlier studies. Henry (1989) in Darden et al (2001) suggests that this may be due to the fact that practice teaching gives novice pre-service teachers an opportunity to experience an actual teaching setting. This perhaps is made possible by opportunities that the exercise provides for students to experience real teaching rather than assuming that they can teach on the basis of the theory of teaching they have been taught. However student teachers' continued lack of interest in teaching may again not be strange. Many of the issues that drive people away from teaching center around welfare, recognition by the public coupled with the fact that teaching requires more work and commitment than what people think. In the opinion of Oduolowu (2009) teacher education faces problems in Nigeria as a result of the societal attitude towards teachers. In Nigeria, the teaching
profession is not respected. Teachers are no longer valued as those who contribute greatly to national development. Obinaju (1996) also found that given the option, 64.4% of those in the teaching profession would opt out of teaching job. Nwagwu (1994), indicated that over 80% of student-teachers in Nigeria said they would not like to make teaching a life career even though they were interested in teaching as a profession. The profession is not lucrative as a result of many impediments such as relatively low remuneration and recognition for teachers, cumulative effect of several years of inadequate attention to education and so on. Teaching practice has been shown to have influence on student teachers’ attitude to and opinion on major components of teaching, it however does have little influence on their interest in teaching as a profession.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that practice teaching is an integral part of teacher education programme that is capable of improving attitude and opinion of teacher candidates especially those who are in the programme by accident.

References


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All correspondence on this paper should be directed to Dr. M.A. Adeleke, Department of Special Education and Curriculum Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. E-mail correspondence is ademorf@yahoo.com

Dr. M.A. Adeleke is the Head of the Department of Special Education and Curriculum Studies where his teaching focus is in Mathematics Education.

B.A. Adesina is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Special Education and Curriculum Studies at Obafemi Awolowo University.

M.O. Salami is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Special Education and Curriculum Studies at Obafemi Awolowo University.

J.A. Adebayo is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Special Education and Curriculum Studies at Obafemi Awolowo University.