

# STRATEGIES FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING PRACTICE EXERCISE IN EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY ABAKALIKI

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## **Abstract**

More than any other single course leaching practice is an exercise or task every student in the Faculty of Education must undergo before meeting the requirement of a bachelor degree in Education. This study was conducted in 2004. The study looked into the problems of teaching practice in Ebonyi Stale University Abakaliki and strategies to be adopted in order to overcome the identified problems. The study used a sample of 120 subjects, oral interviews, structured questionnaire and two research questions, in generating data. The study found some existing problems and adopted ten strategies to be used in solving the identified problems. Simple percentages were used in analyzing the data collection. The study concluded with some recommendations for an improvement.

## **Introduction**

The issue of teaching practice has much (o do with acquisition of learning the art of leaching. Teaching according to Ibckwe (2002), means provision of experiences and guidance activities designed to promote learning on the part of those engaged in the activities. Teachers are those who are professionally trained on the skills of imparting acquired knowledge subject matter and methodology of imparting the knowledge (Akinboye, 1995).

Teaching practice is a practice course for all students 'to take and pass in the Faculty of Education. This is a period that students are sent to secondary schools to put into practice what they have been taught theoretically in lecture halls. Teaching practice is concerned not only with the educational growth and development of the students but also with the professional growth of the student teacher.

Many people take up teaching without any professional objective or commitment. The interest of such people in teaching quickly withers away because of the problems encountered with the pupils they teach, the pupils' attitudes to teachers and the teaching profession, dissatisfaction with the services received in teaching, hope of a better paid job, problems with inspectors and problems of quick adjustments to classroom or individual difficulties. Such teachers use teaching as a stepping-stone to other jobs (Okorie, 1979).

While individuals have different reasons for taking up teaching as an occupation, it is quite relevant to point out here that teaching practice, apart from initiating student teachers into teaching profession affords them the opportunity to choose even tentatively whether to continue teaching or not. Some students who may even have enjoyed and done well in their course face the realities of the classroom, may be well advised to give up the idea of teaching career after their practical experience.

Teaching practice has been described by Okorie (1979), as the period for the student teacher to put into appreciation some of the Psychological, methods and principles he has learned theoretically in lecture rooms. It is the belief of Eke (2000), that teaching practice exposes student teachers to classroom and school situations, the knowledge of which will enable the graduates to be fully aware of what they are going to meet in the school environment.

Teaching practice as an important and vital aspect of teacher education is an indispensable programme for the teacher. It enables him not only to relate theory to practice of education, but equips him to meet the challenges of his professional aim of teaching. Teaching practice helps the student teacher become effective, purposeful, successful and meaningful in his profession.

Teaching practice involves thorough assessment of student teachers' performance by their supervisors. In order to make valid to judgment about the trainees' competences or otherwise, some forms of evaluation or assessment are generally conducted by the supervisors.

There exist some extraneous variables in varying degrees that will threaten the validity of the outcome of the assessment.

Such variables constituting bias in the assessment of the trainee practicing teachers include human, materials, finance and time. Teaching practice exercise will only augur well if the above variables constituting threats to the validity of teaching practice results are adequately taken care of.

## **The Problem**

In the university, it has not been easy to obtain adequate length of lime for leaching practice. There is time clash between Faculty of Education and other Faculties ant! Departments. .This gives student teachers no lull time to be in their schools of practice. There also exist the .problem of inadequate supervisors to go round For effective supervision of teaching practice and at the same time to leach those students who are not

in their practical year. Furthermore, large student population is also a threat to teaching practice exercise. There are too many students in the Faculty of Education to be handled by few available lecturers in the Faculty.

The problem of this study therefore, is to seek for solutions or strategies that could be adopted for solving the identified problems confronting teaching practice exercise in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

#### Research Questions

1. What are the problems of teaching practice exercise in the Faculty of Education of Ebonyi State University?
2. What type of strategies can be adopted for solving teaching practice problems in Ebonyi State University?

#### Methodology Research Design

The design of this study is a survey type carried out in 2004, among lecturers and students in the Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

#### Population

The population of the study comprised 70 lecturers and 908 students all from Faculty of Education Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

#### Sample and Sampling Technique

Simple random sampling was used to select five lecturers from each of the six Departments in the Faculty of Education and 15 students from each of the six Departments in the Faculty of Education.

Thus, the sample for the study was 120 both lecturers and students in the ratio of 30: 90 (lecturers: students).

#### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

Two main types of instruments were used to collect the relevant data for the study.

They were the questionnaire and oral interview. The questionnaire sought to investigate the strategies for solving the problems of Teaching practice exercise in Ebonyi State University. The respondents were required to respond to questionnaire items attached to each research question.

The instrument was validated by three experts from Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State university, Abakaliki. The reliability of the instrument was 0.74. The researcher conducted the oral interview with both the lecturers and students with a view to obtain a better insight into the problems of teaching practice and better strategies to be adopted for an improvement.

The questionnaire instrument for this study was personally administered on the subjects and collected to ensure high rate of return by the researcher. There was a hundred percent rate of return.

#### **Procedure For Data Analysis**

Data collected on this study were statistically analyzed using simple percentages. For an item to be accepted it must score 50% and above while an item that does not score up to 50% will be rejected.

## Results

Research question 1: What are the problems of teaching practice in Ebonyi state University? The responses to this questionnaire obtained through oral interview of both teachers and students, and presented in table 1 below:

S/NO	PROBLEMS	NO RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE RESPONSES
1.	Inadequate number of teachers.	118	98%
JL__	Inadequate number of schools	110	92%
3.'	Large number of student teachers.	115	96%
4.	Accommodation problem.	107	89%
5.	Transportation problem.	109	91%
6.	Lack of commitment by student teachers.	47	39%
7.	Uncooperative attitudes of some school principals.	73	61%,
8.	Inadequate line for teaching practice exercise.	117	97%)
9.	Lack of commitment by lecturers.	86	72%
10.	Corrupt practice by some lecturers.	-79	66%
11.	Corrupt practice by some student teachers.	50	42%
12.	Poor supervision by lecturers.	106	88%

Research question 2: what types of strategies should be adopted for solving the problems of teaching practice exercise in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki? .

**Table 2 Strategies for Solving the Problems of Teaching Practice Exercise in Ebonyi State University Abakaliki**

S/N-0	STRATEGIES	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Employment of adequate number teaching staff.	60 50%	40 33.38%	15 12.5%	5 4.17%
2.	Posting of the students to all the urban areas in the state.	50 41.67%	45 37.5%	10 8.33%	15 12.5%^
3.	Students to live in their practicing area.	40 33.33%	65 54.17%	5 4.17%	10 8.33%.
4.	Special allowance for teaching practice for teachers.	70 38.33%	40 33.33%	8 6.67%	2 1.67%
5.	Every student to be supervised by two supervisors.	65 54.17%	35 .. 35.33%	10 8.33	10 8.33%
6.	Unscheduled type of supervision.	55 45.83%	40 33.33%	12.5%	10 8.33%
*7	A one-shot teaching practice semester duration.	51 42.5%	43 35.83%	16 13.33%	10 8.33%
8.	Teachers should supervise only assigned to them.	90 75%	20 16.67%	10 10.33%	- -
9.	Teaching practice results must submitted within two weeks after teaching practice attaching the official list of students.	60 50%	32 26.67%	20 16.67%	8 6.67%
10.	Teaching practice students should integrated fully in their schools practice.	75 62.5%	25 20.82%	12 10%	8 6.67%

## **Discussion**

The above findings are Discussed hereunder;

**Inadequate Number of Teaching Staff:** This problem is one of the serious problems affecting effective teaching practice exercise in Ebonyi State University. The teacher/students ratio in the faculty of education is so high that during teaching practice, some lecturers are meant to supervise up to thirty students. This practice calls for weak type of supervision. Nwvakpa (2001), was of the view that inadequate number of teaching staff calls for both ineffective teaching and supervision in our secondary schools. Thus, it is necessary for more lecturers to be employed in the Faculty of Education.

**Inadequate Number of Secondary Schools:** Student teachers are usually posted to schools within and around Abakaliki. This is posing a lot of problems as we do post up to forty student teachers to a single school. This makes some of them redundant and ineffective, the student teachers need to be posted far and wide so as to decongest them and make them effective.

**Large Number of student Teachers:** In the faculty of education, there exist very large number of students with few number of lecturers. The posting of these large number of students is already a problem on its own. Majority of these students are being rejected by some school principals' because of their number. This large number of students makes supervision ineffective and ineffective supervision makes students not to know what they ought to know. Nwakpa (2001) believes that ineffective supervision contributes to falling standard in education in Nigeria. He advised that enough number of supervisors should be recruited in our educational Institutions in order to salvage our educational institutions in Nigeria.

4. **Transportation Problems:** This constraint on teaching practice is very serious. Since majority of Education students live around Ishicke it becomes a problem for them to go to their schools of practice regularly and punctually. Thus, they negotiate with their school principals on the days they may be coming to school. This practice is not healthy to teacher education. 5. **Lack of commitment by teachers:** This constraint is very unhealthy to education. It helps to make teaching practice ineffective and the student teachers not to be serious. Some of the supervisors are not committed at all to their jobs, and thus, they do it as they like, by even conducting micro teaching in their offices for their supervisees. While some only collect files from the students and award scores to them.

**Lack of Commitment by Student Teachers:** Many student teachers are not serious with their studies, including teaching practice. Many of the student teachers do not participate in the exercise. They always try to influence some of the supervisors with material things in order to get mark for what they did not do. Even those who go for the exercise, go at their convenience, with or without their note of lessons.

7 **Uncooperative Attitudes of Some School Principals:** It is a known fact that some secondary school principals do not cooperate with the student teachers as they often reject some of these students posted to them. This practice makes the rejected students to risk the chance of being supervised by unofficial supervisors. This act has given the students opportunity of telling lies regarding their posting especially if they do not like the supervisors assigned to their school.

8. **Lack of Adequate Time for Teaching Practice:** It has been observed that time allocation for teaching practice is very short and it does not call for effective instructional supervision. The six weeks given for this exercise does not allow any meaningful supervision to take place. Both teachers and students need enough time for the objective of this exercise to be achieved. In some other professions, industrial training lasts for about six months (Fiippo, 1983). So there is no rationale for teaching practice to last for just one and half months.

**Corrupt Practices by Some Teachers:** It is a fact that some students do not want to do teaching practice at all. In this regard, they try to influence their supervisors with material things. The corrupt supervisors at times do not carry out any supervision at all, but only collect students files with some amount of money. corrupt supervisors award fabulous marks to these students.

**Poor Supervision by Teachers:** this is one of the worst problems facing teaching practice in our university. Some of the teachers do not know what to supervise and how to supervise student

teachers. Some do not even know the importance of leaching practice. This, (hey do not embark in real supervision of student teachers. Thus, teachers and students should be given enough orientation on leaching practice.

Research Question 2: What types of strategies are to be adopted for solving the problems of teaching practice exercise in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki?

Discussion of results in Table 1 283.33% of the respondents supported the first strategy on table 2, which argues that more number of teaching staff should be employed as a means of making teaching practice effective in our university.

The second strategy on Table 2 argues that student teachers should be posted to all the urban areas in the state. This strategy was supported by 79% of the subjects studied. This means that student teachers should be posted to all the towns in Bbonyi Stale.

77.5% of the respondents supported (lie strategy, which says that student teachers should be allowed to live very close to wherever they are doing their teaching practice. This will make them to be very serious and committed.

91.66% of the studied sample supported (he strategy that says that teachers or supervisors should be given special allowance for participating in teaching practice exercise. This will make them to be more committed, and make them not to extort money from their supervisees.

The fifth strategy which says that every student teacher should be supervised by two different supervisors was supported by 83.34% of the respondents. This implies that every student teacher will be supervised by two different lecturers whose scores will be added together and the mean will be determined and used. The two supervisors will not be disclosed to their supervisees.

The sixth strategy, which was supported by 79. 16% of the respondents maintain that unscheduled type of supervision should be adopted. This will make (he student teachers to be attending school daily until (he exercise will be over.

The seventh strategy maintains that teaching practice should be done once not twice and it should last for a full term or semester. This strategy was supported by 98% of the respondents. This implies that (he student teachers should start the term with secondary school students and end the term with them so that (hey will be fully integrated with the school system. This will make them to take active part in all (he school activities including selling, marking, recording and publishing examination results and marking class attendance registers.

The strategy of teachers/supervisors supervising only those assigned to them was favoured by 91.67% of the respondents. This practice will go a long way to eradicate favouritism, nepotism and academic fraud practiced by some lecturers. This practice will also make all student teachers to be very serious with their practical training.

Submission of leaching practice results within two weeks after the exercise was upheld by 76.67% of the respondents. This means that all supervisors must submit their results to teaching practice committee within two weeks after the exercise. This will go a long way to control leaching practice misconduct by some lecturers. Attaching the photocopy of the original list of supervisees will go a long way to check on those who used to supervise their favourites / relatives who are assigned to others and award unmerited scores.

The tenth strategy for solving problems in teaching practice suggests that student teachers should be fully integrated into all the facets of secondary school by assigning special duties to them. They should be made class form masters, teachers on duty, and be made to attend staff meetings, P.T.A. meetings etc. They should be warned or queried when necessary by the principals. They should be made to see themselves as members of staff. They should be attached to experienced teachers for proper assistance.

### **Recommendation**

The following recommendations are made for effective leaching practice in Ebonyi State University.

1. All the findings of this study should be put into practice.
2. The school principals should be made to assess every student teacher and award a maximum mark of 20 percent, while their other two supervisors should award maximum mark of 40 percent each.
3. Posting of student teachers should be published one month before the date of commencement of teaching practice so as to accommodate necessary errors, omissions, special interests etc.

### **Conclusion**

This study identified the major problems confronting teaching practice exercise in Ebonyi State University, to include among others: inadequate number of teaching staff; inadequate number of schools; inadequate time for teaching practice etc.

The study also found among other strategies for solving problems facing teaching practice exercise in Ebonyi State university Lo include: that student teachers should be posted to all the schools in Ebonyi Slate; that each student teacher should be supervised by two supervisors; that leaching practice exercise should last for a full term.

The study actually x-rayed the problems confronting teaching practice in Ebonyi State University and finally found lasting solutions to the identified problems, and the lasting solutions is to put into practice the findings of this study.

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