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ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING PRACTICE EXPERIENCE AS A PREDICTOR TO DEVELOPING TEACHING AND FARM PRACTICAL SKILLS AMONG AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN ZARIA, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study assessed teaching practice experience as a predictor to developing teaching and farm practical skills among agricultural education students in Zaria, Kaduna State Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted with a targeted population of 171 NCE III students of 2021/2022 academic session. Convenience sampling was adopted and 164 students were sampled for the study. Structured, four-point rating scale questionnaire titled Assessing Agricultural Education Students Teaching Practice Questionnaire (AAESTPQ) was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient to give a value of 0.82. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The result revealed that teaching practice has helped agricultural education student teachers to develop teaching skills and also enhance the confidence of the student teachers. The results further revealed that during teaching practice agricultural education student teachers developed various teaching skills with the exception of farm practical skills. It was recommended among others, that the all stakeholders in education industry should encourage and assist schools to establish school farm for students' practical where they can actually acquire the necessary practical skills to enhance teaching of the subject.

Keywords: Assessment, Agricultural Education, Student-teacher, Teaching practice, Skills

Introduction

Teaching practice is an important aspect of teacher training programme in Nigeria education system. It is a compulsory course for all student teachers on training at Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) level. It is one semester course taken at the first semester of the final year of the student training with the course code EDU 311. It is expected that teachers on training should learn, observe and take part in all schooling activities. Francis and Anyaegbunam (2016) define teaching practice as a process by which student teachers are send to schools to develop practical teaching skills within a stipulated period. Jekayinfa, *et al.*, (2012) viewed teaching practice as an important prequalification requirement that enable the teachers in training the opportunity to put into practice what they have learnt in theory. They also pointed out that teaching practice is like the laboratory for practical demonstration of teaching exercise. Gbeyongu *et al.*, (2021) stated that the term teaching practice encompasses all the fundamental learning experiences required by the student teachers within the school settings. This involves teaching skills, expected roles of the teacher, nature of students within and school environment and mastery of the subject matter. This implies that teaching practice is meant to

prepare and increase student teachers confidence in teaching activities and bridge theory and practice by providing opportunity for hand-on learning for student teachers.

According to Gbeyongu *et al.,* (2021), teaching practice is geared towards improving the quality of teaching skills and competence of student teachers. Similarly, Aglazor (2017) pointed out that teaching practice is an avenue were teachers on training understand the mechanisms involve in the teaching process within the school settings. He further stated that the field experiences are challenging with rewarding experiences as one relates with students, teachers and the school management in preparation for teaching profession. In the context of this study teaching practice is seen as an organized activity prepare by the training institution to expose student teachers to a real teaching learning situation, with the aim of helping the student teachers gain confidence and experience in teaching. It is a very important activity for the preparation of student teachers' career, as it allows the student teachers put that which he/she have learned about education and the subject matter into action. Benedictor (2016) pointed out that teaching practice provide experiences to the student teachers in the actual teaching learning environment of which during teaching practice a student teacher is given the opportunity to try the art of teaching before actually getting into the real world of teaching. This implies that experience is a collection of activities which an individual or group of individuals put together resulting to knowledge and skills. The experiences that bring about knowledge and skills are acquired through teaching experiences.

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2017) established the objectives of teaching practice exercise as exposing student teachers to real life classroom experiences, translate educational theories and principles into practice, identify student teachers' strengths and weakness and understand school environment among others. According to Aglazor and Obi (2016), experiences acquired during teaching practice-enhanced student teachers classroom activities in planning and delivering instructions, organizing and managing interactions in classroom environment, cooperating with parents, school management and host community and other responsibilities of the classroom teachers. Koross (2016) sees teaching experience as the culmination of skills, exposure or training acquired over time that enable a person to perform an existing job better or prepare the person for a teaching position.

Skill as defined by Oko (2017) is the ability of a person to accomplish a task with desired precision and certainty. It involves practical knowledge combine with cleverness, expertise, dexterity and ability to perform a task that could be acquired or learnt in school. This implies that for an individual to achieve the aims and objectives of teaching, such individual requires teaching skills. In a similar vein, Atakpa (2014) stated that skill is a rapidity, precision, exhibited through mental and manual repetition of performance of an operation. This implies that skill is the ability to do something well. In other to produce teachers of agricultural education who can carry out teaching profession effectively is very important to develop practical teaching skills right from the teaching practice exercise. It is vital to state that practice is the implementation of theory. That is, in teacher training programme teaching practice exercise is one of the major ways through which theory is practically implemented to help develop teaching profession.

Agricultural education is one of the double major programmes offered at the college of education level. The programme award Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) to those who successfully completed the prescribed courses after three years for full time students and four to five years for part time student. In Nigeria NCE is recognized as the minimum teaching qualification at the pre-primary, primary,

junior secondary, adult, non-formal, and special needs education. The programme is design with the aim of training/preparing teachers with the requisite knowledge and skills for effective teaching at the basic levels of education programmes in Nigeria. It also enables its awardee to secure admission into the university to study education degree for three years (direct entry) instead of four years through Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). The minimum credit requirement for graduation is 118 credits base on NCCE minimum standard. These credits are spread across the various components that made up the NCE with 30 credits for general education, 6 credits for teaching practice, 18 credits for general studies and 64 credits for technical and professional agriculture.

The study therefore aims at examining the experiences acquired by agricultural education student teachers of Federal College of Education Zaria in order to determine if they have developed teaching and farm practical skills during teaching practice exercise.

Statement of the Problem

The teacher is an indispensable personality in all-educational processes, as he/she tends to enhance the physical, emotional and intellectual growth of the child to develop moral character and make them permanently and functionally literate to function effectively in the society, which they live. For the teacher to achieve this, he/she needs appropriate teaching skills deliver effectively for job performance. However, there has been a general outcry on the proliferation of low quality and skilled teachers of Agriculture. Literatures (Ayelaagbe & Bello, 2021; Gbeyongu *et al.*, 2021) have shown that there is low quality of graduate teachers with poor productivity and job performance which is as a result of the teaching practice exercise sometime becoming a demoralizing and very frightening experience. Hence, the expected competencies and teaching skills turns into mirage not minding the essence in the improvement of teacher quality, teaching skills and competency for effective job performance. Based on this background therefore, the study intends to assess teaching practice experience as a predictor to developing teaching and farm practical skills among agricultural education students in Zaria Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. assess the teaching practice experience of agricultural education students in Zaria
2. determine the teaching and farm practical skills developed by agricultural education student teachers through teaching practice experience in Zaria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the teaching practice experience of agricultural education students in Zaria
2. What are the teaching and farm practical skills developed by agricultural education student teachers through teaching practice exercise in Zaria.

Methodology

The study made use of descriptive survey research design. The method is considered most appropriate because, it is intended to collect information on the perception and teaching skills developed by student teachers during teaching practice by students of Agricultural Education in Federal College of Education, Zaria. The target population consisted of 171 NCE III students of 2021/2022 academic session. Convenience sampling was adopted and 164 students were sampled and used for the study. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents with the name "Questionnaire for Assessing Agricultural Education Students Teaching Practice (QAAESTP) with 16 items measuring student teachers' perception while 12 items collected data on the skills developed during teaching practice. Four-point rating scale was used as Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (2) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SA) = 1 for both research questions.

Three experts in the department of Agricultural Education, Federal College of Education, Zaria validated the instrument and all their suggestion and corrections were used to improve the instrument. The researcher distributed the questionnaire and were retrieved immediately after supervision. The reliability of the instrument was determine using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient reliability tool. The value obtained were 0.94 and 0.69 with an overall reliability value of 0.82. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data. A mean of 2.50 and above indicates Agreed with the item statement while a mean of 2.49 and below indicated Disagreed.

Results

Table 1: Experience of Agricultural Education Students During Teaching Practice

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Your supervisor gives you guidance on the week points on the lesson plan at the end of the lesson	188	204	82	8	2.94	0.40	Agreed
2	Your supervisor observes your whole lesson	156	82	104	8	2.69	0.23	Agreed
3	The method of evaluation of students teachers performance in practical component is appropriate	272	222	20	12	3.21	0.81	Agreed
4	Supervisor continuously monitor students teacher activities during teaching practice	112	213	86	22	2.64	0.41	Agreed
5	Supervisor evaluate student teachers through presentation	120	177	110	20	2.61	0.22	Agreed
6	The teaching practice duration is appropriate to develop teaching skills	404	96	50	6	3.39	1.17	Agreed
7	Teaching practice has help me to develop teaching skills	536	90	0	0	3.82	1.57	Agreed
8	Teaching practice enhanced the confidence of the students	448	156	0	0	3.68	1.39	Agreed
9	Teaching practice provides opportunity to the student teacher to apply the acquired knowledge	344	234	0	0	3.52	1.07	Agreed
1	Teaching practice provide experience to make use of instructional materials when necessary	372	213	0	0	3.57	1.14	Agreed
1	Teaching practice provide experience to make improvisation when necessary	376	210	0	0	3.57	1.15	Agreed
1	Student teachers prepare their lesson plans before teaching practice	232	156	42	33	2.82	0.58	Agreed
1	During your teaching practice you taught agricultural science as a subject	124	78	116	49	2.24	0.15	Disagreed
1	There is school farm for teaching practical agriculture in your teaching practice school	36	30	138	76	1.71	0.37	Disagreed
1	Teaching practice is not frighten	112	114	100	48	2.28	0.04	Disagreed
	Teaching practice do not demoralized you as a student teacher	144	129	82	44	2.43	0.20	Disagreed
	Grand Mean					**2.94**		

Sixteen (16) items were presented to the students. The results revealed that twelve (12) of the items have mean values above the cut-off point of 2.50 with mean ranging from 2.64 to 3.82 hence, were agreed that teaching practice develop teaching skills, help in the use of instructional materials and improvisation, and enhance student confidence *inter alia.* Four (4) items were disagreed with mean value less than the cut-off point of 2.50 from 1.71 to 2.28 that teaching practice do not demoralized and frighten student teachers, agricultural student teachers teach agricultural science as a subject and that there is school farm for teaching practical agriculture. The grand mean showed a value of 2.94 (Table 1). This implies that agricultural education students acquired a wide range of experiences during teaching practice exercise. However, the standard deviation value of the items ranges from 0.05 to 1.57 indicating that the students' responses were not homogenous.

Table 2: Teaching and Farm Practical Skills Developed by Agricultural Education Students through Teaching Practice

S/NO.	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Classroom Management	356	213	8	0	3.52	1.05	Agreed
2	Planning and preparation of lesson	432	168	0	0	3.66	1.24	Agreed
3	Lesson presentation	456	150	0	0	3.71	1.31	Agreed
4	Reinforcement of student participation	404	89	0	0	3.62	1.17	Agreed
5	Effective communication	312	258	0	0	4.48	1.01	Agreed
6	Maintaining discipline in the class	488	128	0	0	3.76	1.41	Agreed
7	Lesson evaluation	316	231	12	2	3.42	0.96	Agreed
8	Use of instructional materials	436	165	0	0	3.66	1.26	Agreed
9	Summary of the lesson	332	243	0	0	3.51	1.04	Agreed
10	Ability to manage the time	464	96	24	4	3.56	1.31	Agreed
11	Farm practical skills	12	6	81	118	1.32	0.33	Disagreed
	Grand Mean					**3.38**		

The results in Table 2 presented eleven (11) items of which ten (10) were above the cut-off point of 2.50 with mean value ranges from 3.42 to 3.76 hence, the items were agreed that

teaching practice tends to develop communication skills, lesson presentation, planning and preparation, use of instructional materials, classroom management *inter alia.* Only one (1) item was disagreed with a mean of 1.32 that farm practical skills were not developed during teaching practice. The grand mean value of 3.38 (Table 2) implies that agricultural education students develop various skills during teaching practice exercise. However, the standard deviation value of the items ranges from 0.33 to 1.41 indicating that the students' responses were not homogenous.

Discussion

Based on the result obtained from the data analysed with respect to research question one, the findings in Table 1 revealed that, the students agreed on twelve items as experiences acquired during teaching practice. Which include: teaching practice has help agricultural education student teachers to develop teaching skills, enhance the confidence of the student teachers, provide opportunity for student teachers to apply the acquired knowledge, provide experience to make use of instructional material and make improvisation when necessary. In a similar vein Gbeyongu *et al.*, (2021) pointed out that teaching practice embrace all the learning experiences of student teachers in schools. From practicing of teaching skills and acquisition of the role of a teacher, the whole range of experiences that students go through in school and the practical aspect of the course as distinct from theoretical studies. Darling-Hammond (2014) also pointed out that to produce a quality teacher there is need to improve teachers experience to integrate theory and practice to satisfy the diverse need of their students. In line with that, Aglazor (2017) affirmed that during teaching practice student teachers strive to meet the principles of good practice in an effort to provide the best learning experience for their students.

On the other hand, four items were disagreed in Table 1, indicating that most agricultural education student teachers do not teach agricultural science subject during teaching practice exercise due to lack of school farm for teaching practical agriculture science, teaching practice exercise is frightening and demoralizing as a student teacher. As a result of not teaching agricultural science subject during teaching practice implies that, student teacher may lack sufficient mastery of the subject matter in his/her area of specialization after the exercise. Onuekwusi (2021) reported that there are some secondary school teachers that deliberately refused to teach the subject they learnt in school but consider teaching other subject other than the one learnt. With this scenario, an individual may wonder if actually they were properly trained during teaching practice. On the aspect of school farm, it could be that most of the schools lack sufficient land hence could not make provision for school farm for agricultural farm practical. However, Onwunali *et al.,* (2022) reported lack of facilities such as demonstration farm and agricultural laboratories for practical within Zaria and environs.

Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) similarly observed demoralizing situation and frightening experience by student teachers during teaching practice exercise. Francis and Anyaegbunam (2016) stated that teaching practice is quite challenging especially in developing countries such as Nigeria. Yet, Aijaz et al., (2011) reported that teaching practice enhanced the confidence of student teacher to face the students. In addition, Ayelaagbe and Bello (2021) observed that teaching practice is often associated with some challenges. However, it is rewarding in teachers' preparation and development. Similarly, Azeen (2011) pointed out that, teaching is an exciting and rewarding activity, however demands competences and sound skills to be able to establish and transfer desirable learning ability in the pupils/students. Bhargare (2009) argues that teaching process is multitasking as subject demand well prepared conscientious teachers of sound knowledge.

Findings from Table 2 revealed that agricultural education student teachers developed various teaching skills during teaching practice with the exception of farm practical skills. Korass (2016) reported that teaching practice initiated into student teachers a number of skills and experiences that affected their perception of teaching profession. He also states that it enabled student teacher to master professional skills and increase their knowledge of the subject matter. Similarly, Hamilton-Ekeke (2016) observed that teaching practice helps the student teachers to build his/her practical skills and increase the competencies required for effective teaching job performance. Asaya (2010) pointed out that teaching practice is an avenue that helps student teachers to create awareness on the nature of the expected skills, attitude and knowledge as well as competencies required in teaching profession. Students need these teaching skills to succeed in the future (Driscoll, 2015).

Agricultural education student teacher needs farm practical skills during teaching practice since teaching practice is a pre-qualification requirement that the student teacher needs to put into practice what he/she learnt in theory. Practical in agriculture is a task and operations that provide students with opportunity to attain practical farming experience which they frequently lack (Musa & Harrison 2021). Archibong and Etim (2020) pointed out that, Agricultural science requires an in-depth skill of theoretical and practical knowledge. The practical aspects will assist those students who lack practical farming experience have the opportunity to develop practical skills if they are to fully participate in the future agronomic practices. Nlebem and Chukwu (2020) observed that practical agriculture is the fundamental principles of returning men to the farm. Acquiring practical skills during teaching practice will increase the student teacher's practical knowledge and stimulate good teaching and learning process in agricultural science subject. Considering teaching practice as a laboratory for practical demonstration by the student teacher in training as his /her scope is not limited to the cognitive domain alone but also covers the affective and psychomotor domains.

Conclusion

Teaching practice is a very important aspect in teacher training programme as it tends to develop various teaching skills that will prepare the student teacher in professional career. It should be seen, as an avenue to were student teachers feel fulfilment, growth in experience and period internalising the enviable culture of teaching. The quality of teacher to a great extend is determine by teaching practice exercise as it enable student teachers develop practical teaching skills in preparation of challenges of the subject.

Recommendations

Recommendations were provided based on the findings of the study to include:

1. Training institution should re-strategize to ensure that all agricultural education student teachers are encourage and assign to teach agricultural science subject during teaching practice exercise
2. All stakeholders in the education industry should encourage and assist schools to establish school farm for practical agriculture so that student teachers can use it to develop farm practical skills in preparation for professional career
3. Department of Agricultural Education should encourage student teachers during teaching practice orientation programme to see the need for teaching practice, avoid being frighten, and demoralize during teaching practice exercise.

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