



IN THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER: STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF STUDENT-TEACHERS CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR AND COMPETENCIES IN ABIA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the extent of students' perception of student-teachers' classroom behaviour and competencies during the teaching practice exercise in Abia State. The study identified four classroom behaviours which were lesson presentation, classroom management, use of teaching aids, and student-teachers' personality. Based on these behaviours, four research questions and their corresponding null hypotheses were used to guide the study. The descriptive survey research design was used while a sample of 304 students drawn through purposive sampling technique was used for the study. A research-developed instrument composed of 20-items was used for data collection, which was accessed for validity by experts. Cronbach Alpha reliability yielded a value of 0.87 which showed that the instrument possessed a suitable level of reliability for use. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while independent samples t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Result revealed that student-teachers exhibited poor lesson presentation and use of teaching aid, while they exhibited a commendable level of classroom management and positive personality traits. Based on the result obtained, it was recommended that students' assessment should be integrated into the grading of student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise.

INTRODUCTION

Beyond the attaining of knowledge, education is a veritable tool that has been considered important for the pursuit of sustainable development of individuals, societies and nations. While various definitions exist, education has generally been seen as the process of impacting and attaining new forms of knowledge, skills and attitudes to aid an individual or group of individuals towards becoming productive members of the society (Abdul-Kareem, 2001). It is therefore from this background that every modern society has made massive human and capital investment into the educational development of its

citizen. One area in which investment in education has become most pressing is the aspect of teacher education. This is because the educational development of any society rests squarely on teachers. As Okoli (2011) asserted, no society can grow beyond the quality of its teachers. Commenting further, Ukeje (1988) opined that it is the teacher who will ultimately be responsible for translating policy into action, principles into practice and curriculum into learning. Recognizing that no nation can grow beyond the quality and commitment of its teachers, it has become necessary that teacher education is given adequate attention, effectively monitored and sufficiently financed.



The realization that teachers are foundationally essential for the development of education and society in general, it has become pertinent that there are timely and available training and retraining programmes for teachers (Afe, 1992). Teacher education programmes must be seen as not only a national duty but a sacred obligation that must be given financial and policy priority. While various teacher development programmes have been proposed and implemented, one approach that has enjoyed both historical and universal acceptance is the utilization of teaching practice programmes for pre-service teachers, as this provides becoming teachers the opportunity to translate educational learning principles and policy into classroom learning for students.

Teaching practice exercise occupies a central position in the teacher preparation process. Both globally and in Nigeria, it is generally acknowledged that going into the teaching profession without undergoing teaching practice is a recipe for professional disaster and educational failure, not only for the teacher but also for the student they interact with. It was therefore against this background that the Federal Government of Nigeria (2007) through the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education stipulates that all students in faculties of education at the university level and those in colleges of education must undergo, at least, a compulsory teaching practice exercise. This has remained a statutory requirement for students to be graduated. Furthermore, performance in teaching provides a basis for predicting the future success of teachers, and thus Oluwatayo and Adebule (2012) posited that teaching practice is an indispensable aspect of teacher education process.

While conceptualized differently and operationalized based on local preference, teaching practice is common in all modern societies. According to Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin (2015), teacher education refers to the professional education of teachers towards the attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable to make them efficient and effective in their work, in accordance with the need of a given society at any point in time. It generally includes training, evaluation and programmes that occurs before the commencement or entrance into the teaching profession. Teaching practice programme provide prospective teachers with the opportunity to translate content knowledge, lesson presentation skills, use of teaching aids, classroom management competencies and learners behaviour into actual practice.

During teaching practice, student-teachers are expected to plan and deliver their lessons appropriately using a mixture of pedagogical theories and classroom principles. Good lesson planning recognizes flexibility while also providing prospective teachers with structure and substance (Pollard, 2006). Planning involves the formulation of concise and feasible learning objectives, appropriate organization of content areas and effective use of subject matter terminologies. A central goal of lesson planning involves the formulation of learning objectives linked to specific activities which determine learners' progress and is used to assess the extent of learning.

To effectively attain the lesson objectives, it is fundamental that teachers make use of teaching aids. Teaching aids help in reinforcing the skills, knowledge, facts or ideas presented in the classroom. According to Creneti (2012), it is acknowledged that effective use of relevant and quality teaching aids by student-teachers provides arousal of students' interests, relieving students' anxiety and creates enthusiasm for the subject matter. Specifically, the current generation of students prefers the use of teaching and learning aids such as charts, models, scientific equipment, video and audio cassettes, radio, television, projectors, multimedia information and communication technology (ICT) according to Riegel and Mete (2018). Thus the need for student-teachers to embrace the use of such media for enriching, broadening and deepening the learning experiences for those they may teach. It is therefore incumbent on student-teachers to identify and utilize the most appropriate teaching aids to illustrate and clarify the intents of the lesson so that the learners can understand the importance of each concept.

Another aspect of teaching practice that student-teachers must develop is the effective management of pupils. According to Seweje (2000), teachers, including student-teachers need to understand that the classroom is all about helping the students learn rather than making the teacher the centre of attraction. As such, the teachers must have the ability and authority to control the behaviour of students as well as ensure orderliness. Furthermore, teachers must use a variety of instructional techniques to draw and sustain the attention of students and encourage active participation. All these are made possible through the personality of the student-teacher. A teacher with a warm, amiable and friendly personality is more likely to promote interest among students. On the other hand, the teacher whom students consider harsh, critical and unfriendly is likely to create resistance and instil anxiety among students.



The importance of the above skills and competencies for student-teachers such as lesson preparation and presentation, classroom management, use of teaching aids, and teachers' personality can only be observed and improved upon through the ample provision of opportunities to practice. Therefore, according to Nakpodia (2011, p. 34), the aim of practice teaching is to give student-teachers the opportunity of learning at first hand the actual work of a teacher in typical classroom situations. It provides the student-teacher with the opportunity to meet learners as they are and to practice the theories acquired in pre-service training. To further identify if the aim of teaching practice has been effectively executed, student-teachers must be evaluated.

Normally, student-teachers are assigned to schools for a specific timeframe for them to undertake their teaching practice. During this period, student-teachers are visited by their lecturers to observe the students on different criteria of teaching such as lesson preparation and presentation, classroom management, use of teaching aids and personality of the trainee-teachers. A major goal of these visitations is to assess the extent to which learning theories and classroom principles earlier learnt by the student-teacher can be used in designing and deploying learning objectives among students they teach. Unfortunately, the supervisors posted to such schools can only visit periodically and not regularly. Considering the challenge of funding and logistics, it is recommended by Hamilton-Ekeke (2016) that supervisors should visit at least three times during the period of the teaching practice. It is also suggested that such visitations should be to provide guidance and assessment of the prospective teacher, rather than victimizing student-teachers. Sadly, there have been reoccurring cases of abuse of the supervisory process where supervisors fail to visit the students and thereafter manufacture scores. Other supervisors see this as an opportunity to victimize students whom they considered "stubborn" or indiscipline, while others appease student-teachers by providing undeserved grades in order to gain cheap popularity among them (Hamilton-Ekeke, 2016). It has, therefore, become pertinent to provide an alternative form of assessment of student-teachers from the perspective of the student they teach. It was against this background that the current study was conducted.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the fact that education is the key lever that drives individual and national development, it has only been given lip service within the Nigerian context, especially in the area of teacher education. There has

been a shortage of an adequate number of teachers, with the few making transition from student to teachers lacking the needed skills and competencies needed to effectively perform efficiently on the job. Many student-teachers find it difficult to effect the necessary behavioural changes needed to transit from student role to teacher role, especially those who are engaging in teaching for the first time. Moreover, there is a problem of agreement in the rating of teaching performance of student-teachers by the assessors as there may be demerits of leniency or harshness. Finally, the current practice of assessing students by supervisors might yield an artificial outcome as student-teachers would have prepared the class setting to impress the supervisors. Considering the above challenges and the possibility that students who are taught by student-teachers observe them throughout the period, it is highly possible that such students can provide a better assessment of pre-service teachers than supervisors who visit infrequently. It is against the backdrop of these problems, that the current study seeks to investigate the perception of students on the classroom behaviour of student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise in Abia State.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of students on the classroom competencies and behaviour of student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State. To guide this study, the following specific objectives were made:

1. Assess the perception of students on student-teachers lesson presentation during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State.
2. Investigate the perception of students on student-teachers classroom management during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State.
3. Ascertain the perception of students on student-teachers use of teaching aid during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State.
4. Evaluate the perception of students on student-teachers personality during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State.

Based on the above-listed objectives, the following research questions were developed

1. What is the perception of students on student-teachers lesson presentation during the



teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State?

2. What is the perception of students on student-teachers classroom management during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State?
3. What is the perception of students on student-teachers use of teaching aid during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State?
4. What is the perception of students on student-teachers personality during teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools Abia State?

In answering the above research questions, the following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance to confirm the findings of the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of public and private school students on student-teachers lesson presentation during teaching practice in senior secondary school in Abia State.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of public and private school students on student-teachers classroom management during teaching practice in senior secondary school in Abia State.
3. There is no significant difference in the perception of public and private school students on student-teachers use of teaching aid during teaching practice in senior secondary school in Abia State.
4. There is no significant difference in the perception of public and private school students on student-teachers personality during teaching practice in senior secondary school in Abia State.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The research design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey research design. This design was deemed appropriate for this study because the researcher was only interested in surveying the perception of students on the classroom competencies and behaviour of student-teachers posted to their school.

Population of the Study: The population of the study was comprised of all the students taught by student-teachers during the first term of the 2019/2020 academic session in the five local government areas of Abia State. This period coincided with the period which student teachers were assigned to schools for the teaching practice exercise by various institutions

including the Federal College of Education, Obudu. The total number of students could not be ascertained due to logistics and operational consideration.

Sample and Sampling Technique: To arrive at an appropriate sample, the purposive and convenience sampling technique was used. The researcher obtained the names of schools where student teachers were assigned to in Abia State. From these schools, a total number of 304 students voluntarily agreed to respond to the instrument for data collection. These students assessed a total of 53 student-teachers in 23 schools. The schools were both public and private. Furthermore, only students in SS II were used for the study because this researcher believes that they can adequately respond to the items under consideration.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was a researcher-developed instrument titled Students' Perception of Classroom Behaviour of Student-Teachers Inventory (SPCBSTI). The instrument was a 20-item structured questionnaire which was divided into two broad sections titled A and B. Section A of the instrument was designed to elicit responses on demographic data from the respondents such as their gender, school type, name of student-teacher being assessed. Section B of the instrument which was designed in a modified Likert scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) which were scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 points. This section was further divided into four sections assessing the classroom behaviour of lesson preparation, classroom management, use of teaching aid and student-teachers' personality with five items each. This instrument was made simple compared to that used by supervisors so that students can readily provide their opinion.

The instrument was validated by experts from the Departments of Educational Management and Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling from the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. They validated the items in terms of clarity of language, sentence structure, relevance of the items to the study and content coverage. Their suggestions and modifications were integrated into the final version of the instrument before administration. For reliability, copies of the instrument were administered on 30 students taught by student-teachers in Northern ABIA State. Data obtained were subjected to Cronbach Alpha method of reliability analysis and this yielded a value of 0.87 which is indicative of a suitable level of reliability.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure: For data collection, the researchers along with two research assistants, administered the instrument to the



respondents in the sampled schools. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents within a period of three weeks. The copies distributed were collected on the same day immediately after completion from the respondents to ensure optimal retrieval rate.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the perception of students on student-teachers lesson presentation during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State?'

Table 1: Perception of students on lesson presentation of student-teachers

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Clearly state objective before lesson presentation	1.90	0.97	VLE
2	Mastery of subject and content areas	2.98	1.01	HE
3	Development of different aspects of the lesson	2.09	1.09	LE
4	Logical Presentation of content	2.80	1.01	HE
5	Effective usage of time	1.83	0.97	VLE
	Grand Mean	2.32	1.01	LE

From the result displayed in Table 1, the perception of students on the lesson preparation competencies of student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise was documented. According to the result, a grand mean of 2.31 (SD = 1.01) was obtained on lesson preparation ability of student-teachers. Based on this result, it,

therefore, indicates that student-teachers exhibit lesson preparation to a low extent in Abia State.

Research Question Two: What is the perception of students on student-teachers classroom management during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State?'

Table 2: Perception of students on classroom management of student-teachers

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
6	Class participation during lessons	3.10	0.97	VHE
7	Classroom control of disruptive behaviour	3.06	0.99	VHE
8	Classroom arrangement	2.96	1.05	HE
9	Reinforcement of pupils' response	2.94	1.07	HE
10	Creates collaboration among student	3.17	1.01	VHE
	Grand Mean	3.05	1.02	VHE

From the result displayed in Table 2, the perception of students on the classroom management competencies of student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise was documented. According to the result, a grand mean of 3.05 (SD = 1.02) was obtained on classroom management ability of student-teachers. Based on this result, it, therefore, indicates that student-

teachers exhibit classroom management competencies to a very high extent in Abia State.

Research Question Three: What is the perception of students on student-teachers use of teaching aid during the teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools in Abia State?'

Table 3: Perception of students on the use of teaching aid among student-teachers

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Selection of lesson aid matches the topic presented	1.85	0.98	VLE
12	Use of various teaching aids	1.93	1.05	VLE
13	Relate the teaching aid to the topic under discussion	1.92	1.04	VLE
14	Encourage students to develop their own teaching aid	1.89	1.09	VLE
15	Develop personal teaching aid for students	2.94	1.09	HE
	Grand Mean	1.98	1.05	VLE

From the result displayed in Table 3, the perception of students on the effective use of teaching aids among

student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise was presented after data analysis. According to the



result, a grand mean of 1.98 (SD = 1.05) was obtained on classroom ability of student-teachers to effectively use teaching aid. Based on this result, it, therefore, indicates that the use of teaching aids was to a very low extent among student-teachers in Abia State.

Research Question Four: What is the perception of students on student-teachers personality during teaching practice exercise in senior secondary schools Abia State?

Table 4: Perception of students on the student-teachers personality of student-teachers

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
16	Neatness	3.15	0.72	VHE
17	Friendliness	2.74	0.72	HE
18	Approachable	2.91	0.81	HE
19	Consistent	2.63	0.92	HE
20	Encouraging	3.04	0.72	VHE
	Grand Mean	2.89	0.78	HE

From the result displayed in Table 4, the perception of students on the student-teachers personality during the teaching practice exercise was presented after data analysis. According to the result, a grand mean of 2.89 (SD = 0.78) was obtained on of student-teachers personality during the teaching practice exercise. Based on this result, it, therefore, indicates that student-

teachers personality was considered suitable to a high extent in Abia State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the perception of public and private school students on student-teachers lesson presentation during teaching practice in senior secondary school in Abia State.

Table 5: Independent samples t-test of perception of students on lesson presentation skills of student-teachers during teaching practice

School Type	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	Alpha	Decision
Public	200	2.08	0.82	302	1.25	0.211	0.05	Retain
Private	104	2.31	0.77					Ho ₁

From the result shown in Table 5, it is shown that when the mean ratings of public school student (mean = 3.08, SD = 0.82) and private school students (mean = 2.31, S.D = 0.77) on their perception of lesson presentation among student-teachers were subjected to independent samples t-test, a t-value of 1.25 was obtained with a corresponding p-value of 0.211 which was greater than 0.05 level of statistical confidence. Based on this result, it can be stated that public and private school students

do not differ significantly in their perception of student-teachers lesson presentation. The null hypothesis is therefore retained.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the perception of public and private school students on student-teachers classroom management during teaching practice in senior secondary school in Abia State.

Table 6: Independent samples t-test of perception of students on classroom management skills of student-teachers during teaching practice

School Type	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	p-value	Alpha	Decision
Public	200	3.13	0.71	302	0.577	0.56	0.05	Retain
Private	104	2.98	0.84					Ho ₂

From the result shown in Table 6, it is shown that when the mean ratings of public school student (mean = 3.13, SD = 0.71) and private school students (mean = 2.98, S.D = 0.84) on their perception of classroom management among student-teachers were subjected to independent samples t-test, a t-value of 0.577 was obtained with a corresponding p-value of 0.56 which was greater than 0.05 level of statistical confidence. Based on this result, it can be stated that public and private school students do not differ significantly in their perception of student-teachers classroom management skills. The null hypothesis is therefore retained.



Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the perception of public and private school students on student-teachers use of teaching aid during teaching practice in senior secondary school in Abia State.

Table 7: Independent samples t-test of perception of students on the use of teaching aid of student-teachers during teaching practice

School Type	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	p-value	Alpha	Decision
Public	200	1.64	0.83	302	2.19	0.03	0.05	Rejected
Private	104	2.43	0.87					Ho ₃

From the result shown in Table 7, it is shown that when the mean ratings of public school student (mean = 1.64, S.D = 0.83) and private school students (mean = 2.43, S.D = 0.87) on their perception of the use of teaching aid among student-teachers were subjected to independent samples t-test, a t-value of 2.19 was obtained with a corresponding p-value of 0.03 which was lesser than 0.05 level of statistical confidence. Based on this result, it can be stated that public and

private school students differ significantly in their perception of student-teachers' use of lesson aid. The null hypothesis is therefore retained.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the perception of public and private school students on student-teachers personality during teaching practice in senior secondary schools in Abia State.

Table 8: Independent samples t-test of perception of students on student-teachers personality during teaching practice

School Type	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	p-value	Alpha	Decision
Public	200	2.14	0.79	302	2.56	0.01	0.05	Reject Ho ₄
Private	104	2.96	0.83					

From the result shown in Table 8, it is shown that when the mean ratings of public school student (mean = 1.64, S.D = 0.83) and private school students (mean = 2.43, S.D = 0.87) on their perception of student-teachers' personality were subjected to independent samples t-test, a t-value of 2.56 was obtained with a corresponding p-value of 0.01 which was lesser than 0.05 level of statistical confidence. Based on this result, it can be stated that public and private school students differ significantly in their perception of student-teachers personality during teaching practice. The null hypothesis is therefore retained.

and may resort to off-task behaviour in the classroom. This result is similar to that obtained by Oluwatayo and Adebule (2012) who found out that student-teachers skill in lesson preparation was very low in Ekiti State University, Ekiti State. Furthermore, the result showed that there this finding is similar both in public and private secondary schools.

It was also shown that student-teachers had a very high extent of classroom management skills. This result implies that most the students were rated as having effective classroom management skill such as encouraging class participation during lessons, classroom control of disruptive behaviour, adequate classroom arrangement, reinforcement of pupils; response and enables collaboration among students. The findings of this study were obtained in both public and private schools which means that both student teachers assigned to public and private schools exhibit a high level of classroom management techniques. This result is similar to those obtained by Nwanekezie et al (2011) that student-teachers in the University of Port Harcourt had effective classroom management skills when interacting with students during teaching practice exercises.

Furthermore, the result showed that student-teachers use teaching aids to a very low extent. The implication of this is that student-teachers fail to use appropriate teaching aid and do not incorporate

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the result obtained after the analysis of data, it was revealed that there is a low extent of students-teachers effective presentation of lessons during the teaching practice exercise. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in the perception of public and private secondary school teachers on the extent of lesson presentation among student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise. This result implies that students do not have adequate skills for lesson presentation such as to clearly state lesson objectives, development of different aspects of a lesson, and effective usage of item. The resultant effect would be that students would lose track of the lesson



teaching aids that match topics taught and presented. This result might be attributed to the poor skills of student-teachers to develop their own instructional materials as well as guide students on how to develop local instructional materials. The findings of this study are similar to that obtained by Nzilano (2013) who found that pre-service teachers from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania had limited competencies in the use of teaching aids during their teaching practice exercise.

Finally, it was shown that student-teachers' personality was considered positive to a very high extent. It, therefore, indicates that the students displayed qualities such as neatness, friendliness, consistency and encouragement. The findings of this research question showed that student-teachers personality could help improve the learning potential of the students they teach. This finding aligns with that obtained by Aydin, Bavli, and Alci (2013) who found out that pre-service teachers' personality has a significant role to play in both their development and those of the students they teach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings obtained, the following recommendations were therefore made:

1. Currently, what is in practice in terms of assessment of student-teachers is the report and grading from their supervisors only. This practice is not comprehensive enough as the supervisor visit the student-teacher approximately three times in the six weeks of the teaching practice. The supervisors' assessment only will not be adequate. It is therefore recommended that students' assessment should be integrated into the grading of student-teachers during the teaching practice exercise.
2. Faculty should have a micro-teaching laboratory where students will be well exposed to the rudiments of teaching.
3. There should be teaching practice handbook for the students to have a uniform method of writing lesson notes. Rules and regulations of practical teaching will also be stipulated in this handbook.
4. 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.

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