

TOWARDS ENSURING QUALITATIVE SUPERVISION OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: The role of education in any national development cannot be overemphasized. Teachers are of the core of any educational enterprise. Hence, teaching practice programme plays a vital role in the preparation of teachers in all teacher training institutions including the universities in Nigeria. To this end, this paper examines the ways and manners teaching practice supervision is being conducted in Nigerian universities with the aim of suggesting probable measures that could help in ensuring qualitative supervision of teaching practice in Nigeria universities for sustainable development. The paper discusses the concept of supervision, standards of teaching practice, challenges of qualitative supervision of teaching practice in Nigeria, and measures to ensure qualitative supervision of teaching practice for sustainable development in Nigeria. Some of these include organizing orientation programme for institutional based supervisors, increase in the duration of teaching practice, imbibing the idea of clinical supervision, effective collaboration with school teachers/management, supervision conference with student teachers, constituting monitoring team among others. It concludes that emphasis must be on quality assurance in the supervision of teaching practice programme in Nigerian Universities for sustainable development.

Keywords: Supervision, Teaching Practice, Sustainable Development, Student Teacher, Qualitative.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a sine qua-non to economic, social, political and technological development. Teachers are at the core of any educational enterprise. They thus need to be adequately prepared. Teaching Practice, as a programme, has been accepted as an integral part in the preparation of teachers in all teacher training institutions including the universities in Nigeria. It is through this exercise that teaching skills are acquired and developed both by practice and by reflection on pedagogy and theories of education. The teacher training institution provides student teacher with the necessary initiation into teaching profession where consistent and continuous practice, and the acquisition of experience are absolutely necessary for his improvement in the field and sustainable national development.

The supervisor needs to be aware that student teachers attitude in a teaching practice situation is quite different to that of normal classroom situation. There is what we popularly call 'teaching practice syndrome' which is noticeable among students of a school which is continuously used for demonstration

purposes. It will lengthen the time the student teacher needs to gain confidence, skills in teaching and the ability to cope with various challenges in the classroom situation (Awoniyi, 1979).

It is evident that, there are many challenges in the application of theoretical knowledge gained by the student teachers in actual classroom situation. This is where the supervisors' level of competencies and expertise as good facilitator and mentor are very essential. They need to play a guidance role to enable the student teacher perform optimally in the classroom situation for sustainable development of the programme. Oforma (2005) identifies technical competence, mental ability, human relation skills, high achievement and creativity as the attributes needed by supervisors. Supervisors of teaching practices programme are therefore expected to be equipped with adequate skills that will make them function maximally and prepare them to give qualitative supervision in any teaching practice programme in a bid to sustain high quality of education for the future development of Nigeria. Supervision of teaching practice should be based on the need that the student teacher does his/her teaching practice in schools and needs to be stimulated, motivated, supported, guided and inspired. This process could be called ideal supervision which could as well be referred to as mentoring.

CONCEPT OF SUPERVISION

Contemporary writers have slightly different concepts about what supervision means. Most of them however, seem to agree that supervision is an organized, democratic process involving the supervisor and the persons or groups of persons supervised, for the achievement of desired objectives, Nwaogu (1980) viewed supervision as a process of stimulating growth and a means of helping teachers to help themselves. Ojelabi (1981) described supervision as a constant and continuous process of personal guidance based on frequent visits to a school to give concrete and constructive advice and encouragement to teachers, so as to improve the learning and teaching situation in schools. Hence, supervision is a modern idea that should assist student teachers in improving instruction in the classroom.

Philip, Francis, David, Dennis, Atara and Micheal (2000) opined that supervision is a term that covers a wide range of teacher education processes and activities. It begins before a teaching practice, intensifies through the practice and continues after the practice has been completed. It includes aspects of advising, guiding, counseling, modeling, coaching, evaluating and assessing. It is a form of systematic, purposeful behaviour having clear aims and destructive content and activities.

There are no qualifications in supervision and currently supervisors appear to base their practices largely in their own experience gained when they were student teachers and from observing a small number of lessons alongside more experienced supervisors. The skill of supervision are therefore caught and not taught (Siens & Ebmeier, 1996).

The process of teaching practice supervision is mainly based on a one-to-one relationship which appears to be the dominant practices in Nigerian universities. Philip et al (2000) remarked that as much as student teachers are supervised as part of an education and training curriculum, psychological perspectives are important. They raise such question as: (a) How do student teachers, as adults, learn in an experiential setting? (b) To what extent does supervision promote or inhibit particular aspects of learning for student teachers? (c) How can the learning outcomes of supervision be described, measured, assessed and evaluated?

They also observe that there are also anthropological and ecological perspectives. The anthropological perspective involve understanding the school culture, the culture of the class they teach, the cultures from which their students are drawn, the culture of the teaching profession they wish to join, and the cultural characteristics of the act of supervision. To the supervisor, these understandings are equally important and it is in trying to come to terms with the variety of cultures that many supervisors find major challenges.

From ecological perspective, supervision takes place in different locations, each with their own distinctive environmental characteristics. This is the more reason why some supervisors prefer one location to another. It is common to note that special requests are made by some supervisors to be posted to a particular area for teaching practice supervision. Hence, the question about 'where' of supervision deserve as much attention as those concerned with the 'how' or 'what'?

STANDARDS OF TEACHING PRACTICE

The supervision of the teaching practice programme is directly related to the preparation given to student teachers before the exercise and to the follow-up activities that occur once the teaching practice has ended. Basically, this preparation and follow-up is shared between the staff in the teacher education institution (Faculty of Education) and the schools where the teaching practice takes place.

There is need for supervisors to fully understand the guidelines for supervision that the universities have established. This has to be shared with colleagues in the schools and obviously with the student teachers for sustainable development of the programme.

As of September 1999, Alberta Education has determined eleven (11) standards of quality teaching they believe teachers should adhere to as follows: (a) Teachers understand the context of teaching (b) Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical framework within which they work. (c) Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach. (d) Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning. (e) Teachers engage in a range of planning activities. (f) Teachers create and maintain environments conducive to learning. (g) Teachers translate curriculum content and objective into meaningful learning activities. (h) Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs. (i) Teachers gather and use information about students learning needs and progress. (j) Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools. (k) Teachers are career-long learners.

It therefore becomes highly imperative for the supervisors of teaching practice programme to fully understand, as well, all these basic qualities that are inherent in prospective teacher they are building in various Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities.

CHALLENGES OF QUALITATIVE SUPERVISION OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

There are number of difficulties associated with teaching practice supervision in Nigerian Universities. These problems are identified and briefly discussed as follows:-

Time Allocation for Teaching Practice Programme

Most importantly, the time allocation for teaching practice is usually too short. A period of six weeks is allocated for the first teaching practice in 200 Level while another six weeks is allocated for the second teaching practice in 300 level. This period is not enough for the supervisors to effectively supervise all students and at the same time preventing students from getting used to the profession. Although in United States, according to Victorian Institute of Teaching, the minimum practicum (supervised teaching practice) requirements for approved programme made all four year undergraduate programs to include at least 80 days of supervised teaching practice which is equivalent to twelve weeks of Teaching Practice Supervision in Nigeria but broken into two periods – (200 Level and 300 Level). More also in United States, one year postgraduate teacher education programmes must include at least 45 days of supervised teaching practice (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2010) while in Nigeria, it is only six weeks (40 days). Awoniyi (1979) remarked

that “an enthusiastic student – teacher once lamented that he had hardly begun to enjoy teaching, acquiring skills and gaining confidence when his practice had finished”, inadequate time has made many supervisors to do the work in a haste, hence the supervision of teaching practice in Nigeria is very shoddy.

Increase in number of Students

Students enrolment in Faculties of Education (both full time and part-time) has increased over the years. The number of staff has not increased in relation to the proportion of student's enrolment. Waite (1994) opined that the supervision may also be inadequate if there are large number of students in training and a shortage of tutors in the training colleges. This makes it more difficult to effectively supervise a student's teaching as efforts are made to supervise a reasonable high number of students within a very limited time.

Inadequate Orientation for Supervisors

The orientation for supervisors of Teaching Practice is inadequate as this programme is not organized from time to time. The ‘young’ lecturers at times commit several mistakes on the field because of lack of experience and orientation before commencement of the exercise. Where as in University of Botswana, one of the guidelines for lecturers supervising teaching practice is that all staff members in the department must attend the orientation workshops of their student teachers, so that they are aware of all that is required of the student teachers once they are in the field, (University of Botswana Special Education Teacher Trainees Internship Supervision Scale, 2012). Supervisors of teaching practice programme in Nigerian universities are not compelled to attend student teachers orientation programme. At times, no special orientation is organized for these supervisors before going to the field. This problem needs urgent attention and immediate action in Nigerian universities for sustainable development of teaching practice programmes.

Lack of effective collaboration with school teachers

The current practice of teaching practice supervision does not place emphasis on collaboration between the institutional based supervisors and subject teachers in schools. The school teachers are not empowered to assess and evaluate the student teachers performance with scores apart from marking their lesson plans/notes. This is the more reason why some school teachers handover totally to the student teachers without following him/her to class to teach and the supervisors not minding to see the cooperating teachers before assessing and evaluating

the performance of the student-teacher in classroom. Once a visit is made to the school principal or vice-principal as the case may be, the next is to look for the student teacher. Boydell (1986) opined that in United States of America, there is emphasis on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships within the traditional supervisor – student – class teacher triad and the influence of several context within which the triad operates. This aspect of supervision is neglected in Nigerian universities as the class teachers (co-operating teachers) are not involved in evaluating the students apart from marking of lesson notes which at times are commonly handled by head of departments or vice-principal of a school.

Lack of commitment on the part of Supervisors

Based on our experience it has been observed that some supervisors of teaching practice programme are not totally committed to the exercise. Many have been found to assess only the lesson plans of the student teachers, look at their institutional materials and evaluate them without following them to the class to teach. Some do not go to the various schools where the student teachers are placed but gather them together in a school that is convenient for him/her to locate for the teaching practice. This makes the student teachers teaching to be mechanical as they are not used to the school environment and the students they teach in the class during the process of supervision. Hence, this makes the performance of student teachers in teaching practice to be superficial at times since the conduct of the exercise is closely linked with examinations. Many students teachers are known to prepare elaborate instructional aids which they would hardly prepare as regular teachers. At times, these instructional aide catch the attention of the supervisor and therefore award a very impressive mark not minding other stages of the evaluation process.

Inconsistent Supervisory Visit

Many of the student teachers are not being supervised, not until the close end of the programmes. Some supervisors visit the student teachers during the last week of the exercise. In a situation where the student teachers ought to have been supervised three times at different periods by different supervisors, one may discover that the three supervisors many come the same week which is the last week or at worst the same day. Where a student teacher may be observed by different supervisors over the period of a teaching practice, it is important that the student teacher receives consistent supervision. There are situations where some student teachers are assessed once. This may not be sufficient enough to determine the performance of student teachers in teaching practice programme. According to University of Botswana guideline for

teaching practice supervision, it is emphasized that each student shall be assessed three times in each teaching subject and the mark shall be the single average of the six grades. (University of Botswana, 2012). In Nigeria, student teachers are supervised once or at most twice depending on the University standard. Without this consistency, the student may develop unnecessary anxiety and stress.

Lack of Post-observation visit

Many of the supervisors, if not all, do not embark on post-observation visit to the student teachers. Once an assessment and evaluation has been made, we do not go back to see whether the student has shown some level of improvement. The reason for this could be linked to time factor and most importantly low remuneration for field supervision.

At times one may manage to use the mobilization fee paid to supervise all the student teachers assigned to him or her, while some would have finished the money before they go at all. How would these supervisors make another visit for post-observation? This is a common practice in Nigeria. The worse of the situation is that, the mobilization fee for teaching practice is not paid until the end of the programme in some universities due to administrative bottlenecks.

Lack of Post-Observation Conference with Student Teachers

Many of the supervisors do not organize post-observation conference with student teachers. Experience has shown that, immediately after supervising the student teacher in the class, the supervisor may drop his/her comment inside the lesson plan of the students without any other interaction. The reason for organizing this, is that, opinions and ideas about a lesson can be exchanged. In order to sustain the ideals of this programme, adequate time must be set aside by the supervisor for this exercise.

Lack of Control

Many of the supervisors do not adhere strictly to the arrangement put in place by the Teaching Practice Committee. There are situations where supervisor will not submit results according to time specification and some violate the ethics and moral standard that are expected of them. Hence, some lecturers have been dismissed through professional misconduct exhibited during the teaching practice exercise.

MEASURES TO ENSURE QUALITATIVE SUPERVISION OF TEACHING PRACTICE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Successful supervision of teaching practice is one of the most important keys to teacher improvement, and with teacher improvement, comes an improved

education for school students (Asim, Basse & Obi, 2005). With the recent concern of stakeholders in Nigeria, on standard of education, one needs to realize that whatever level the education might be in Nigeria contribution to its sustainable development has to be adequately promoted. The National Policy on Education (2004) reiterates that “no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers”. Hence adequate measures must be put in place to see to the quality of teachers that are being produced and this starts from the qualitative supervision of teaching practice in Nigerian universities and other teaching training institutions in the country.

The following are the suggested measures to ensure qualitative supervision of teaching practice programme for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Organising Orientation Programme for Institutional Based Supervisors

There is need to arrange induction, seminars, workshops and conferences for supervisors of teaching practice programme in Nigerian universities. This could be part of the capacity building for lecturers. Idowu (2005) maintains that capacity building for sustainable development requires change to be made in the education of new generation of technician and professionals. Since teaching has now been recognized as a profession in Nigeria, it therefore becomes very important to be mindful of the qualities of teachers being produced in our various universities as the future of our national development is in their hands. A lot of challenges have taken place in teaching situation today. This ranges from the classroom setting to teaching methodology and facilities used. Therefore the concept of teaching must move with his shifting in global paradigm (Mbachu, 2008). In essence, orientation of supervisors should be made compulsory before participation.

Increase in the duration of Teaching Practice

There is need for upward review of the teaching practice duration to enable the supervisors have enough time to supervise the student teachers effectively. Ayodele and Oyewole (2012) suggest that the current teaching practice programme of twelve (12) weeks duration should be increased to one year programme to develop the professional competencies of prospective teachers. This will provide supervisors the opportunity of having more time to stay with individual student teacher in the classroom.

Imbibing the idea of Clinical Supervision

The supervisors should make use of clinical supervision with the objective of helping the student teachers to overcome some challenges that may come

their way during this exercise. The supervisors should not condemn or too bossy on the student teachers, but rather, be friendly and facilitatory in their discharge of duties. To supervise the student teacher, the supervisor needs tools, but also inspiration. Jomite (2012) refers to this tool as Inspiromat. With supervision Inspiromat, it means methods the supervisor can use to stimulate, motivate, guide or support the student teachers in his/her learning process. This idea we refer to as clinical supervision. If a behaviour or practice needs investigation, the supervisors would do the following: (a) Meet with the teacher and clarify any misconception (b) Advise the teacher of the behaviour in question and its relationship to the standards of teaching practice. (c) Advise the teacher of the continuance of on-going supervision. (d) Advise the teacher of the consequences of the evaluation (e) Prepare and deliver a written account of the interaction

Effective Collaboration with School Teachers/Management

The institutional based supervisors need to work in collaboration with school teachers who are popularly known as cooperating teachers and the school management. The tripartite (institutional supervisor, cooperating teacher and school management) nature of supervision brings into play markedly different sorts of skills from those most often employed in supervision of students in classroom teaching in schools. The ‘three’ supervisors must be actively involved in evaluating the students teachers’ performance. Certain percentage of scores (25%) should be made available for school teachers (cooperating teacher) and the school management (Principal/Vice-Principal/HOD) to award the student teacher at the end of programme. This may provide a feedback on the conduct of some students. The idea of many student teachers misbehaving after they have been supervised by their lecturers will reduce to the barest minimum. These set of supervisors could be seen as a supervision team.

A principal, as a result of supervision, identifies the need for a change in behaviours or practices of student teachers who are of bad character. The university should act promptly and decisively on any case(s) brought before it by the school management. This will help to instill some level of discipline on the students.

Teaching Practice Supervisory Conference with Student Teachers

Teaching Practice supervisory conference refers to what takes place before or after a lesson is observed by a supervisor. Conducting successful supervisory conference before and after lesson observations,

demands particular conceptual understanding of the task and practical skills in conferencing. Supervision has to be conceptualized within the philosophy and knowledge base of the other parts of the teacher education programme with a view of providing frameworks and guidelines to improve future practice. The focus should be on both classroom lesson observation and post-lesson supervisory conferences. The discussion should be focused, systematic and purposive. In doing this, the discussion may centre on the wealth of experience of the supervisor. However, the student teachers knowledge of the classroom situation may be useful as well.

Constituting Monitoring Team

This could be very essential for sustainable development of teaching practice programme. Dandago (2012) observes that supervision is a popular term in the public sector but poorly discharged. He remarks that what might be lacking is the expected 'close marking' to ensure that the supervisors do things according to plan/budget and the reporting of cases of laxity or ineffectiveness for appropriate remedial action to be taken. This idea was effectively utilized by the erstwhile. The University of Education, Ikere-Ekiti now consolidated as Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. A monitoring team was led by an eminent Professor and Deans of other faculties in the university during the 2010/2011 teaching practice exercise. The essence was to oversee the activities of the supervisors on the field and the conduct of the student teachers. This provided an ample opportunity for on-spot assessment and good interaction with the various school principals. Hence, the idea was laudable by the stakeholders and facilitator in solving peculiar problems. This helped to bring effective control on the character of both staff and students, hence, the idea of good performance. The monitoring team could comprise some notable Professors in the Faculty of Education who should be adequately remunerated for performing this task. It becomes highly imperative for institutions to be vigilant in discharging their supervisory roles and they should be regular and punctual in submitting report about those they supervise for proper performance evaluation and reward or punishment.

Supervisors should endeavour to collect time tables on Monday of the week they will be assessing the student teacher. This will help the supervisors to know the time schedule for student teachers to have lessons in the school.

Be punctual and lecturers must ensure they arrive at the schools for assessment on time.

Be a model of appropriate behaviour, including dressing and use of language. Student teachers are human beings who must be treated with modesty and decorum.

Supervisors should follow schedule and refrain from intruding on students you are not scheduled to supervise.

Exercise patience to observe the entire lesson and be objective in reporting. The idea of spending few minutes with a student teacher in the class should be discouraged.

Endeavour to check whether the student teacher has made improvement suggested by other assessors. This will help to determine the level of progress that these students have made and whether they take to corrections or not.

All supervisors should be able to comment freely on low marks and high marks and made a follow-up on students who did not perform well.

CONCLUSION

The importance of qualitative supervision of teaching practice programme for sustainable development in Nigerian Universities cannot be over-emphasised. Since supervision is an integral part of the teaching practice undertaken in schools by both full-time and part-time students seeking professional initial qualifications, emphasis must be on quality assurance. The educational system can only succeed to the extent where teachers are professional equipped and updated. Hence, the supervisors should be ready to be more committed and help the student teachers on teaching to be equipped professionally as this is regarded as the entry point of their career. The shoddy and hasty supervision exercise by some lecturers should be discouraged as this will not augur well for the sustainable development of teaching profession in Nigeria.

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