

## **ESTABLISHING A LINK BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING: ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION STUDENTS' RESULTS**

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### **Abstract**

The study was conducted to examine the relationship between students' theoretical knowledge of education and their level of effectiveness in teaching. The study investigated the nature of the relationship between students' performances in Education courses and Teaching Practice on the one hand, and the relationship between their performances in their teaching subject and Teaching Practice on the other. A sample size of 268 students who underwent the 2011/2012 new teaching practice exercise of six months were systematically sampled for the study. The data for the study, CGPA in education courses year 2 and their grade point in teaching practice were obtained. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation procedure. The correlation coefficients of 0.119 and 0.150 obtained for the measure of the two relationships were found to be very low. Only the relationship ( $r=0.150$ ) between students' teaching subject CGPA and their teaching practice GP was significant. With these sorts of worrying findings' it was recommended that the process of delivery of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) curricula be improved and that teacher educators be retrained to meet this challenge. The researcher also recommends that the Colleges of Education in particular be more selective in the type of students they admit.

Key words: theory of teaching, practice of teaching, Education courses, teaching subject, relationship, performance

## 1.1 Introduction

Education has been rightly recognized globally as the veritable tool for the development of nations. In Nigeria education is seen as an instrument “Par excellence” for effecting national development (National Policy on Education, (NPE), 2004). The teacher’s role in determining the quality of education is also widely acknowledged. As the NPE (2004) states, no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers. And according to Okoh (2012), the role of the teacher as the vehicle by which the citizens of any country attain its education cannot be underrated.

The quality teacher is largely determined, as in any profession, by the quality of training they have received. Teacher education programme is structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. In Nigeria, the Faculties of Education, Colleges of Education, and National Teachers Institutes are the key institutions mainly responsible for the training and production of teachers in the country.

As in other professions, the training of teachers has two components – the theoretical preparation and practical exposure. This is why all the curricula for teacher education emphasize a dynamic methodology and curriculum coupled with practice.

The pre-service education curricula at the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) level emphasize the theory of education (teaching and learning), knowledge of subject matter, ability to communicate, management of the classroom, sound character (Urevbu, 1991). Students should be equipped before going into teaching practice with the command of knowledge of subject matter acquisition of acceptable levels, teaching skills, knowledge of the pupils, knowledge about the syllabus and scheme of work of the class among others (Araroni, 1998; Olaitan & Agusiobo, 1981).

It is in no other place, than teacher training institutions that the solid foundation for effective teaching can be appropriately laid (Araromi, 1998). Thus teachers are made to undergo a programme of training designed to enhance their performance and elevate them above the level of mediocrity. This claim can not be made for people who non -

professionals who find themselves in teaching by some accident. Therefore, it is this preparation that is expected to differentiate professional and non-professional teachers.

There are educationists who hold the view that the current teacher education programmes at all levels are deficient. They perceived the programmes to be defiant in the preparation of teachers for the professional tasks of teaching especially with respect to their relevance to modern day realities (Adepoju, 2008). Many institutions offering teacher education in Nigeria appears to over emphasize theory at the expense of practice (Falayajo, 2004; Okeke, 2001). Practice is the ultimate yardstick for measuring an effective teacher.

The perceived deficiencies of the teacher education programme in the country have been partly captured in the following words by Falayajo (2004):

.... The big problem really is being well trained to do  
The work they are expected to do in school. The  
professional nature of the preparation of teachers  
seems to have taken the second place in the scheme  
of things.... Teachers who are prepared for secondary  
schools are even worse. Some of them may not have  
stood in front of a class for ten days before being  
absorbed into the reaching force.

The academic preparation of the teacher has two dual approaches; the impartation of the knowledge of the subject area (teaching subject, e.g., social studies) and knowledge of the teaching process (through Education courses). Thus every teacher at the NCE level has one or two teachings subjects (one major and one minor) and courses in education including psychology, methodology and curriculum students, administration and management, and foundation courses in philosophy, history, sociology, etc.

The teaching practice is the practical aspect of teacher education designed to give the students an opportunity to put into practice certain skills and knowledge they have acquired in theory. This practice embraces all the learning experiences of student teachers in the school setting (Daniel, 2008). The goal of teaching practice is to provide practical training to teacher trainees with the aim of becoming professionals. Therefore, theory and practice must meet in the teacher for him to be effective.

The new teacher education programme aims at producing professional teachers who have learnt not only the content, but the skills and attitude as well. For instance, the teachers' choice of an appropriate method depends on a number of factors including his knowledge of the purpose and use of the method learnt (Sabo, 2012).

During training, teachers are provided with the opportunities to acquire skills and attitudes. The teachers need to use the learning content (professional knowledge and theory) in such a way that it also relates to and supports the development of professional skills and engagement and attitude (NCCE, 2010). Thus, logically, knowledge and pedagogy, subject matter and skill in teaching are expected to be directly and strongly related. Educational researchers in this country have not given attention to this area, thus there is a dearth of empirical research reports of this area.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The teacher trainee is prepared with the assumption that what he acquires in theory will be put into practice at the time of teaching. The connection between the level of the teachers' knowledge of the theory of education (teaching and learning) and the performance in teaching (practice of teaching) should be positively correlated. For instance, a good knowledge of the theory courses in education should lead to a good lesson delivery on the part of the teacher. This relationship is equally presumed to exist between the teacher's knowledge of subject matter (teaching subject or subject area(s)) and skills in teaching practice.

Attention is rarely paid to the relationship between knowledge of theory and ability in practice of teaching. The concern here is this to find out whether or not a relationship exists between student's acquired knowledge (indicated in performance in theory courses) in education and subject matter, on the one hand, and demonstrated ability in teaching practice (indicated by teaching practice grades) on the other.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The objectives of this study were to determine:

- 1) the nature of the relationship between student teachers' performance in Education courses and their scores in teaching practice;
- 2) the nature of the relationships between student teachers' performance in their teaching subject (subject major/ minor) and their scores in teaching practice; and
- 3) the nature of the relationship between performances in Education courses and teaching subject(s).

### **1.4 Hypotheses**

The following hypothesis were tested in the course of the study (Alpha level of 0.05 was fixed for all testing).

- 1) There is no significant relationship between student teachers' performance in education courses and their scores in teaching practice.
- 2) There is no significant relationship between student teachers' knowledge of their subject area(s) and performance in teaching practice.
- 3) There is no significant relationship between students' performances in Education courses and teaching practice.

## **2.0 Method of the Study**

### **2.1 Design**

The design adopted for the study was the correlation design. Correlation design relates two variables and indicates the strength of their relationship and shows the level of significance of index of correlation. A bivariate correlation procedure, namely the Pearson Product Moment Correlation method was adopted to relate pairs of performances in Education courses, teaching subject (major/minor) and teaching practice.

## **2.2 Population**

The population of the study consisted of the students of the Federal College and Education, Okene who participated in the teaching practice exercise of 2011/2012 academic session. This set was considered because they were the first set to have undergone the six months (two terms) duration of teaching practice and so were deemed to have sufficient teaching exposure.

## **2.3 Sample**

A systematic random sampling technique was adopted to obtain the sample for the study. About a third, translating to 268 students, of the population of students (totaling 894) who completed the teaching practice exercise were involved in the study. The list of all the students who participated in the teaching practice of that session was obtained from the College Teaching Practice Unit. Every third candidate on the list, beginning from the first, was systematically selected down the list until the list was exhausted.

## **2.4 Sources of data**

The data on performance used for the study was obtained from the Directorate of examination of the College. The CGPAs of students in Education courses and their teaching subject(s) (average CGPAs in the case of students with two teaching subjects) were extracted from the list. The students' GP in teaching practice were also obtained side by side.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

The set of CGPAs (in Education courses and Teaching/Subject Area(s)) and GP collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Procedure for all computations.

### 3.0 Results

The results of this study are presented in Tables 1 & 2.

**Table 1:** Relationship between students' CGPA in Education courses and their GP in teaching practice

<b>Correlation Variables</b>	<b>n</b>	$\bar{x}$	<b>s</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>sig. lev</b>
Edu CGPA	268	2.316	0.868		
				0.119*	0.051
TP GP	268	3.075	0.542		

\*Not significant at the alpha level of 0.05

Table 1 shows that the Pearson Product Moment Correlation value of 0.119 is not significant at 0.05 alpha level, since the significant level of 0.051 is greater than the alpha level. Besides, the correlation coefficient of 0.119 is very low, implying that there is no definite (doubtful) relationship between performances in Education courses and Teaching Practice. However, the significant level of 0.51 indicates a nearly significant relationship between the correlated variables.

**Table 2:** Relationship between students' CGPA in teaching subjects and their GP in teaching practice

<b>Correlation Variables</b>	<b>n</b>	$\bar{x}$	<b>s</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>sig. lev</b>
Subj. CGPA	268	2.324	1.021		
				0.150*	0.014
TP GP	268	3.075	0.87		

\*Significant at the alpha level of 0.05

Table 2 shows that the correlation coefficient of 0.150, though very low, is significant at the alpha level of 0.05. This conclusion is made because the significant level of 0.014 is less than the alpha level fixed. This indicates that there is a significant

relationship between teaching subject(s) CGPA and teaching practice GP of the students. This very low coefficient index however implies that there is no definite relationship between the two variables.

**Table 3:** Relationship between students' Education courses CGPA and their CGPA in teaching subjects.

<b>Correlation Variables</b>	<b>n</b>	$\bar{x}$	<b>s</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>sig. lev</b>
Edu. CGPA	268	2.316	0.866		
				0.736*	0.000
Subj. CGPA	268	2.324	01.021		

\*Significant at the alpha level of 0.05

Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficient index of 0.736, is high indicating a high definite relationship established between the two variables. Because the obtained coefficient is significant at 0.000, which is less than the fixed alpha level of 0.05, there is thus a very significant relationship between students' performance in Education courses and their teaching subject. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between subject(s) CGPA and teaching practice GP of the students.

### 3.1 Discussion of Findings

The result in Table 1 shows that there is a very weak positive relationship between Education CGPA and teaching practice GP, which is also not significant at the 0.05 level. This finding is worrying and surprising because it was expected that students' knowledge of pedagogy (theory of education) should have positive influence on their performance in teaching practice. However, since this is not so, it can be deduced that there is no strong evidence that the students can link the theory of education acquired with the practice of teaching during the teaching practice exercise. This situation is very unfortunate because it thus means that all the studies in theoretical preparation do not significantly impact on their ability or effectiveness as teachers in training. This finding suggests either that the theoretical preparation as obtained in the NCE curricula is wanting or that the delivery of



the curriculum is not effective. Or, still that even if the curriculum is adequate and well delivered, the students did not acquire much. One wants to believe that the education curriculum for the programme is adequate enough. The options are thus: either that there is a general ineffective delivery of the curriculum or that the students have merely failed to apply. The average CGPA of 2.316 is indicative that the later option may be the case. Averagely, the students' scores in Education is below 50 percent (below C grade).

The other finding that there is a significant relationship between students CGPA in their subject area(s) and performance in teaching practice is a bit reassuring. But even so, the very low coefficient index of 0.150 is also worrying. It thus means that there is a very weak relationship between the knowledge of theory acquired, whether in area of education or teaching subjects, and practice of teaching.

The average CGPA of 2.324 for the student, which is barely above a D grade, shows how low students perform on the whole. The average grade point of 3.075 does show that the students are located at the centre of assessment continuum (equivalent to a C grade). One can discern a general pattern of central tendency in the grading of students teaching practice by the assessors. More than ninety percent (90%) of the sample have a C grade.

In Table 3, a correlation coefficient of 0.736 was obtained as a measure of the degree of the relationship between students' performances in Education courses and courses in their teaching subject(s). This coefficient indicates a definite strong relationship between the two variables. The result suggests a possible similarity in the mode of delivery of the two groups of courses and also affirms the relative stable nature of the academic quality of the students involved in the study.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

There appears to be a general problem with students connecting their knowledge of education and their knowledge of the subject matter with their activity of teaching. Something has to be done, either in the way of NCE curricula delivery or about the students that are admitted to the NCE programme.

## 4.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations are to address the issues identified in this study are offered;

- 1) The renewal of the curricula in Education and subject matter could be considered in line with these findings.
- 2) Ways teacher educators can improve on the delivery of curriculum should be seriously considered. The retaining of educators could readily come to the aid in this respect.
- 3) The teacher training institutions in general, and especially the Colleges of Educations, should be more selective in the type of students that they admit for the NCE programme. The present situation is that the NCE programme generally tends to attract very weak students who cannot be admitted either by the University or Polytechnics. Inducements should be given to attract suitably qualified candidates to teaching at this level.

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