

A GUIDE TO **TEACHING PRACTICE**



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TEACHING PRACTICE SUPERVISION

BY

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Introduction

Every profession has its own phase of skill development. The teaching profession *is* no exception to that rule. Teaching is a complex activity, which requires application of certain skills to effectively bring about in learners, desirable changes in abilities and behaviours that can contribute to better living and functioning. Teaching skills are acquired by reflection on theories of education. These theories learnt through philosophy, psychology, sociology and management are too generalized: their applications are determined by peculiarity of each classroom situation. Thus, some gaps exist between what the prospective teacher learns in theory and what he/she meets in actual classroom situations. For instance, teachers' abilities in managing students' unruly behaviours are constantly being challenged. Teachers who are not skillful enough in classroom management and control find it difficult to teach meaningfully due to the resultant disorderly environment. Such teachers often expect that there should be a simple solution to every problem, oblivious of the fact that different and equally or more effective ways can be evolved in real classroom situations.

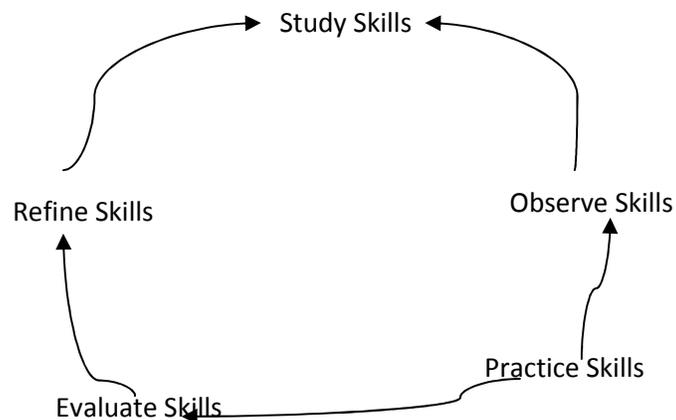
Experience has shown that teaching is not as easy as some people would want to believe. Teaching is regarded as a busy job (Wragg, 1985). As such, development of appropriate skills is a necessity for meaningful knowledge to be imparted to students. Among the important teaching skills to be developed are adequate lesson preparation, clarity of voice and expression in lesson delivery, motivating the class to undertake the planned tasks and keeping a vigilant overview of the class while teaching. Essential to the development of teaching skills, like other skill development, is the opportunity to use skills in a functional setting. This might explain the reason why new entrants into teaching, especially if untrained, find it difficult to cope with the demands of teaching. This makes the need for teaching practice inevitable. Teaching practice affords the trainees, the necessary exposure to varied and effective ways of handling teaching in different classroom situation serving as a reservoir of knowledge to draw from in subsequent situations.

Consequently, effective supervision of teaching practice is vital in providing opportunities and guidance for a student teacher towards role acquisition as well as in the development of appropriate skills and personal attributes of a teacher.

Concept of Teaching Skills

Teaching takes place in two stages namely pre-active and interactive stages. Pre-active teaching involves the selection of appropriate content, methods and materials, and organizing these in relation to students' needs.

Interactive teaching entails managing the teaching-learning process in the classroom through interaction with students, the use of teaching aids to reinforce students' learning and evaluating the students and the entire teaching-learning process. These activities require different skills, which are acquired in a three-stage process (Perrot, 1982), as illustrated in figure 1.



Source: Perrot, E (1982). *Effective teaching: A Practical guide in improving your teaching*. New York: Longman, p.9.

The first stage is a cognitive one where the skill will have to be studied and observed, in order to form a concept. The second stage is the practice of skills. Complex skills cannot be learnt without a great deal of practice. This is more so in teaching, where flexible use of teaching skills is required in the different classroom situations. The third stage is the evaluation of skills or feedback. Feedback on classroom performance often takes the form of a supervisor's comments immediately after the lesson is over. This must be followed by another attempt at the lesson and then evaluation for improvement.

Among the important skills to be acquired by a teacher are:

- (i) Planning skills;
- (ii) Lesson presentation skills;
- (iii) Questioning skills;
- (iv) Class organization skills; and,
- (v) Evaluation skills.

Planning skills include preparation of lesson plan and devising instructional procedures to achieve the stated instructional objectives. To effectively present a lesson, a teacher needs to be skillful in set induction, closure, varying the stimulus, clarity of explanation and using familiar examples for clarifying explanation, and concept formation.

Questioning is useful in ensuring students' participation in a lesson, through reasonable responses to questions.

For meaningful interactions between the teacher and the learner, the teacher must be skilled in communication techniques. These include effective writing, effective speaking, effective listening, encouraging feedback through questioning and reinforcement and the use of non-verbal clues.

Teaching consists of two main sets of activities; instruction and management. Class organisation skills are needed to create and maintain a controlled environment in which instruction can take place effectively. Accurate evaluation of performance is necessary. This skill helps to improve the teaching-learning process.

Acquisition of these skills makes teaching practice a necessity. This is so because teaching practice provides the controlled practice situations, which are reality-based for the development and subsequent application of the teaching skills.

Concept of Teaching Practice

Teaching practice can be referred to as the period of guided teaching in which the student teacher is exposed to normal teaching conditions a given period of time. It is a "simulation" exercise of the actual teaching in schools. Teaching practice helps the student teacher to perform the following roles necessary for development and internalization of teaching skills and competences (Olaitan & Agusiobo, 1981).

- (i) applying principles of learning to bring about meaningful changes in the learners' experiences;
- (ii) organising syllabus content for development of sequential learning;
- (iii) applying knowledge of human growth and development of children to provide effective teaching-learning situation;
- (iv) developing efficient and effective practices for carrying out routine management of a classroom;
- (v) communicating and working effectively with pupils, staff and other member of the school;
- (vi) applying and using the principles of evaluation to improve instruction; and,
- (vii) having the opportunity to participate in community activities, which will enhance the professional growth of a teacher.

However, effective supervision of teaching practice is necessary to equip a student-teacher in the performance of these roles.

Teaching Practice Supervision

Teaching practice supervision is a means by which organised help is provided for the student teacher to improve the total teaching-learning situation, and stimulate his/her continuous professional development. The two basic processes involved in practice teaching are:

- (i) the teaching process; and
- (ii) the examination process.

The teaching process aims at helping the student teacher to put into practice the theories and methods of education which he/she has learnt while the examination process aims at assessing the teaching effectiveness of the student teacher for purposes of grading and certification. Teaching practice supervision is meant to monitor both the strength and weaknesses of a student-teacher. However, the primary concern of the supervisor should be to encourage the student teacher to capitalize on his/her strengths and minimize his/her weaknesses. That is, supervision should be seen as a 'helping' function rather than a 'reporting' function.

There are four stages in teaching practice supervision. These are:

1. The pre-active stage. This is the most important stage where the **lunching** practice exercise is planned and organised. It involves the following steps:
 - (a) professional training in the subject methodology.
 - (b) mini teaching practice through techniques such as microteaching peer teaching, and model lessons;
 - (c) liaising fusing with the host schools; and
 - (d) posting students to the schools for the teaching exercise.
2. The interactive stage. This involves pre-lesson conference where the supervisor exchanges pleasantries with the trainees with a view to allaying student teachers' fears and anxieties. He/she also makes necessary corrections on planned teaching materials and methods.
3. The lesson-observation stage. During lesson presentation by the student teacher, the supervisor, using an assessment format, records the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. The areas usually assessed include preparation of lesson notes, lesson presentation with, relevant teaching aids and class management. Other areas are communication and evaluation techniques and the personality of the student teacher as it relates to good tone of, and social interaction in, the class.

A typical Student Teaching Practice Assessment Format has 3 sections. The first section focuses on student teacher's personal data such as name, matriculation number, department, school of practice, subject taught, lesson topic and duration.

Section two which has 3 subsections is concerned with the assessment of lesson notes, presentation of lesson, mastery of subject, language used, use of teaching aids and general method of teaching, and personality of the teacher in term of class management, neatness and dignity

Section 3 is concerned with supervisor's general comments on the student. A typical teaching Practice Assessment Format is in Table I.

TABLE 1: TEACHING ASSESSMENT FORMAT

(Three copies to be completed -original for the coordinator)

-Duplicate for the Supervisor)

-Triplicate for the student) Table I

STUDENT'S NAME MATRIC NO

STUDENT'S DEPARTMENT..... LEVEL.....

SCHOOL

Form/ClassSUBJECT LESSON TOPIC.....

.....DURATION.....

.....DATE.....

Criteria	Very Good	Good	Very Fair		Just Fair	Poor	Score for each item	Superv. Comment (if any)
I Lesson Notes: Relevant, adequate Logical and sequential (15%) It Presentation:, 10%	10.5-15	9-10.4	7.5-8.9	6.8-7.4	6.0-6.7	below 6	.....	.....
8. Method s: suitable & systematic.	7-10	6-6.9	5-5.9	4.5-4.9	4.0-4.4	below 4	.....	.....
9. Knowledge or skills imparted: adequate, accurate & relevant	10.5-15	9-10.4	7.5-8.9	6.8-7.4	6.0-6.7	below 6	.....	.....
10. Pupils' participation & involvement: adequate & appropriate	7-10	6-6.9	5-5.9	4.5-4.9	4.0-4.4	below 4	.....	.....
11. Voice & Language: Clear fluent and accurate	7-10	6-6.9	5-5.9	4.5-4.9	4.0-4.4	below 4	.....	.....
12. Use of B.B.: Clear, neat, orderly and	7-10	6-6.9	5-5.9	4.5-4.9	4.0-4.4	below 4	.....	.....

appropriately used								
13. Other teaching aids used: well prepared, relevant and appropriately used:	7-10	6-6.9	5-5.9	4.5-4.9	4.0-4.4	below 4	.....	.....
14. " Euitable distribution of time	3.5-S	3.0-3.:	2.5-2.9	2.3-2.4	2.0-2.2	below 2	.....	.....
III Personality (15%)	7-10	6-6.9	5-5.9	4.5-4.9	4.0-4.4	below 4	.....	.....
(a) Discipline: class management & temperature (b) Neatness, : dignity and enthusiasm							.....
Overall-All Rating	3 5-5 70-1000	3-3.4 60-69	2.5-2.9 50-59	2.3-2.4 45-49 ,	2.0-2.2 40-44	below 2 below 40	. . %

General comments on student

.....

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Supervisor's Name **Signature**..... **Date**.....

Source: Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin.

4. The post-observation stage. This comes up immediately after lesson presentation. The supervisor, in polite manners, points out the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson, and makes suggestions on how to bring about improvement in subsequent practices.

Problems of Teaching Practice Supervision

1. Inadequate number of supervisors compared with the number of trainees. Consequently, each supervisor has too many students to supervise and within a short period of time (usually six weeks). To further compound the problem, the first two weeks are supervision-free to allow the student teachers settle down and get familiar with their schools and job. Thus, in order to supervise as many students as possible, the pre-observation conference, is either totally absent or too short for any meaningful interaction. The lesson observation itself is rushed with no chance for post-lesson conference to make useful suggestions for

improvement. Instead, skeletal feedback such as "a fairly good lesson", "try to improve", and "the lesson is o.k." are given on the lesson plan.

2 Reaction of students by participating schools. Student teachers often face the problem of being rejected by the cooperating schools, where they are accepted, there is the problem of not being given their (major) teaching subjects to teach. Closely related to this is the problem of getting qualified and/or willing cooperating teachers in the host schools, who would guide the student teachers.

3. Student-teachers assigned to a supervisor are usually spread **over** a far distance, and/or in the rural areas with poor access roads. This results usually in infrequent or inadequate visits by the supervisors.

4. The teaching practice curriculum, as it is linked with examination, is superficial. In order to pass, many student teachers are known to prepare elaborate teaching materials, which they would hardly prepare as regular teachers.

5. The use of non-specialist supervisors who lack the required skills and experience on the subject (in some extreme cases, untrained supervisors). This results in subjective assessment. For instance, a Christian or a Muslim who is not literate in Arabic Language cannot objectively assess a student-teacher in the teaching of Arabic Language.

6. The criteria for evaluation are largely ambiguous, giving room for misplaced emphasis. On the whole, 'summative', 'judgment day' or 'pay day' approach supercedes the 'advisory' or 'guidance' approach (Onibokun, 1984). Thus, the supervisor's role as a guardian, adviser and a liaison officer is relegated to the background.

Suggestions for Effective and Efficient Teaching Practice

The most important aspect of teaching practice is, perhaps, its organization. The first step in this direction is the training of the student teacher in the acquisition of theoretical knowledge in the subject matter. In addition, student teachers should be given the opportunity to observe good lessons through simulated teaching and model lessons. Thus, student teachers should be exposed to techniques such as micro-teaching, team-teaching and interaction analysis.

Other important activities of teaching practice organisation to be considered include determining adequate duration, weights to be attached to the different teaching activities and competencies, liaising with host schools and actually posting the students to these schools.

To successfully develop teaching competencies in student teachers, the following steps are necessary:

- (i) Subject specialists should be used as supervisors. Where this is difficult, subject-field specialists should be engaged;
- (ii) Intensive training programmes should be regularly organised for teaching practice supervisors to improve the quality of supervision and promote uniformity in evaluation;
- (iii) Evaluation of 'teaching practice should be both formative and summative, with greater emphasis on the former. This formative evaluation should stress the continuous assessment method which involves evaluation of student-teachers at different stages and by different categories of people such as peers, co-operating teachers methodology teachers and principals of the host schools;
- (iv) During teaching practice, regular conferences should hold between the supervisors and the student teachers. This is necessary for purposes of counselling, directing, educating and guiding the trainees in their work To achieve these purposes, the supervisor should exhibit good human relations to allay any fears of the student-teacher and assure him/her (student) of his/her (supervisor) intention to assist, in addition to grading and,
- (v) Feedback should be immediate after the conclusion of the lesson, using dialogue, counselling, written comments and analysis form to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson and suggestion?-, for improvement. This feedback should equip the student teacher to identify the stages of growth and progress involved in learning to teach , and to lead him/her to a realization of self, and his/her competence to continue his/her development in the profession.

Conclusion

Experience during teaching practice helps to link theory with practice. To develop desirable teaching skills therefore, there must be thorough and adequate exposure of would-be teachers to school situations, through micro-and macro-teaching practices. Consequently effective supervision of teaching practice is vital in helping student teachers to capitalize on their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. The acquired teaching skills are then transferred to teaching in schools after certification.

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