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PRACTICUM AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA: RELEVANCE OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

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Abstract: This study determined the relevance of innovative practices in teacher education in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted qualitative research paradigm, and employed case study design. The study was guided by one research question: what is the relevance of innovative practices in the training of teachers in Enugu State, Nigeria? The researchers studied twenty-five postgraduate diploma of education students of Godfrey Okoye University Enugu, Nigeria. Observation guide was used for data collection. The data collection focused on lesson preparation, introduction, lesson development, use of instructional aids, classroom management and procedures, teacher variables, and evaluation. The study found that active, dynamic and participatory classrooms, and use of varied learning resources and experiences are some innovative practices that respond to effective teacher preparation. The study concludes that creativity and innovation enhance practicum and teacher education. It therefore recommends that student teachers should develop keen interest in innovative practices in their professional training.

Keywords: Innovative practices, practicum, teacher education, Enugu, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Teaching practice is the major practicum that prepares teachers effectively in teacher education. Innovation and creativity seems to be relegated to the background in teacher education. Teachers are professionally trained in colleges of education or institutes of education or faculties of education or schools of education or universities of education, just to mention a few. Teacher education therefore is the professional training teachers receive that prepares them effectively in working with learners in the society. Practicum is the hallmark of teacher education. Teaching practice is a typical practicum in teacher education that cannot be overemphasized. Teaching practice is a pre-service education and training practicum provided to help shape the pedagogical horn of the student teachers. Teaching practice enables the student teacher to adopt the best pedagogy for their professional training as teachers. This calls for the need of innovative practices in the training so as to equip the teacher trainees with sustainable knowledge and skills in responding to some societal needs especially in this 21st century knowledge society.

There has been social outcry about teacher education in Enugu State, Nigeria. Stakeholders in the education sector are concerned about the quality of teachers being produced in teacher education institutions. Therefore, to successfully carry out expected activities at schools and in the community, prospective teachers must be provided with the information, skills, values, and behaviours necessary through teacher education (Mondal, Saha, & Baidya, 2015). Professional development ensures that teachers can at any moment effectively and

efficiently address the needs of society (Osuji, 2009). The answer to this is for teacher education institutions to adhere to innovative practices that will respond to today's learners and societal needs.

Experiences of practicum are important elements of teacher education programmes. This is because they provide prospective teachers with conducive environment to apply their knowledge and skills in real classroom settings under the auspices of experienced teachers. Practicum offers hands-on learning, allowing prospective teachers to connect theory to practice, refine their teaching strategies, and develop classroom management skills. They also provide valuable opportunities to reflect on teaching practices, receive feedback, and adjust their approaches based on observations and mentor guidance (Osuji & Oluoch-Suleh, 2017).

It has been observed that most teacher education programmes structure teacher practice; a core component of teacher education practicum across different grade levels, subjects, and diverse learning environments to offer a comprehensive understanding of teaching. These experiences help prospective teachers gain a deeper insight into the complexities of the classroom, including diverse student needs, effective instructional methods, and the importance of fostering inclusive and engaging learning environments (Gandeebo, 2014).

The production of professional teachers for enhanced standard of instruction in schools especially in teaching and learning is the goal or aim of teacher education institutions in most countries of the world (Geduld & Sathorar, 2016). When higher education institutions generate dedicated, competent, and professional teachers, this can be accomplished (Du Toit, 2011). According to Nomlomo and Sosibo, 2016, the issue of the production of substandard teachers who provide subpar instruction is as a result of insufficient teacher preparation. Hence, rethinking teacher education through innovative practices in practicums is necessary to address the issues with the poor teaching standards that have an impact on the standard of instruction and learning (Mahabeer, 2018). Production of quality teachers then, will help improve the quality of teaching and learning in the society (Osuji, 2009). Therefore, there is need to revisit the pedagogical approaches of forming student teachers in teacher training institutions in Enugu State, Nigeria.

The word 'pedagogy' originated from ancient Greece, where it meant a teacher leading a child. As defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, pedagogy is the study of the methods and activities of teaching. In the recent time, where scholars lay emphasis on 21st century knowledge society for sustenance in the developmental strides of nations, the method of teaching and learning has always been stressed. Therefore, a relook into the goal of education is part and parcel of quality teacher education (UNESCO, 2020). That notwithstanding, a paradigm and mental shift, and focusing on policies that are geared towards societal transformation through quality education for teacher trainees is key. This can only be achieved where innovative practices become a response to teacher education.

Innovation is all about injecting new ideas to a phenomenon. Innovation generally signifies a substantial positive change (Sime & Latchanna, 2016). Innovation in teaching and learning is imperative in producing a quality teacher. Teaching and learning that is crowned with innovation and creativity produces effective learning outcomes (Lehto, Kairisto & Liisa, 2011). It is therefore necessary for teaching and learning to focus always on developing new competencies in teachers in order to adopt new ways of facilitating and transferring knowledge. Therefore, the place of innovative practices in teacher education especially in teaching practice practicum cannot be downplayed.

Innovative practices play a significant role in value addition to teacher education. It is worthy to note that education is constantly evolving. Therefore, innovative practices allow teacher education programmes to adapt to the changing needs including technological advancements, and diverse learning styles. Here, innovative practices introduce new pedagogical approaches and methodologies, equipping teachers with a broader range of teaching techniques to meet the needs of learners from different backgrounds. The use of technology in the classroom, project-based learning, and creative thinking and collaborative method are some of the innovative practices in teaching and learning in this 21st century knowledge society (Sadar, 2020).
It is very interesting to note that in teacher education programmes, preparing student teachers for the future is always the key. Here, innovative practices in teacher education focus on cultivating skills like adaptability, creativity, and problem solving-skills that are vital in a rapidly changing world. The integration is technology in teaching and learning is one of such adaptability skills in teacher education. Therefore, training student teachers to use educational apps, online teaching and learning platforms such as Udemy, and YouTube, and

other digital resources to enhance teaching and learning experiences is paramount to teacher education programmes (Soriano-Sánchez, 2023).

Innovative practices encourage a culture of continuous learning among teachers. By exposing them to new teaching methodologies, research-based practices, and ongoing professional development opportunities, teacher education programmes foster a mindset of lifelong learning that benefits both teachers and their students. Innovation in teacher education encourages teachers to experiment with new teaching methods and reflect on their effectiveness. This reflective practice is essential for refining teaching strategies and continuously improving classroom outcomes (Osuji & Oluoch-Suleh, 2017). Since students come from diverse cultural milieu and learning backgrounds, innovative practices equip teachers to address this diversity effectively, promoting inclusivity and personalized learning experiences.

In their theoretical study, Grewal (2016) reviewed innovative practices in teacher education in India. The study identified collaborative teaching, reflective teaching, constructivism, blended-learning, social gracefulness, and information and communications technology as innovative practices in teacher education. This study is different from the current study in terms of study setting, method and focus. The current was conducted in Nigeria. It was empirical in nature and adopted case study in its design. It focused on quality observation of the lesson preparation, lesson introduction, lesson development, use of instructional aids, classroom management and procedures, teacher variables and evaluation.

In the same vein, in their theoretical paper, Yusuf (2022) concentrated on refocusing teacher education in Nigeria. The paper tried to draw comparison from teacher education in Australia, USA, Singapore, and Finland. In order to meet best global practice and for students' enhanced learning outcomes, the paper disclosed that the adoption of ICT in teacher education motivates teaching and learning. It would also help graduates to compete favourably in the job market. This paper despite not being empirical in nature is related to the present study in terms of study setting, and area of focus.

Furthermore, Soriano-Sánchez (2023) in their study on "Innovative educational practices in higher education" adopted a systematic review in the study design. The study review twenty studies from different locations such as Spain, China, Iran, Australia, Finland, Costa Rica, Minnesota, Turkey, and Michigan. The study revealed that gamification, start-ups, use of ICT, and blended learning were major innovative practices in teacher education. Therefore, they help improve health and learning outcomes. More so, they enhance creativity in students and build their self-confidence. Furthermore, they enhance quality of education, increases class attendance and students' satisfaction. This study is different from the current study in terms of design, but related in study focus. Therefore, the need for the current study is vital.

Innovative practices in education focuses on a novel way of conceptualizing educational issues and looking for their solutions. Innovative practices involve creativity, vitality, dynamism, active engagement in classroom matters. These are essential elements in teacher education. They help build the confidence of the student teachers/teacher trainees as they engage in teaching practice; an efficient practicum in teacher. This also enables them to gain best and full learning experiences that quality education offers. Teaching practice is an important practicum in teacher education that effectively prepares the student teacher for the needs of the society. As an indispensable tool in teacher education, much attention needs to be paid to it because the manpower needed to transform the society is produced by teachers. Therefore, there is need for innovation in lesson preparation, content facilitation, and evaluation. The effective utilization of technology in this task cannot be downplayed. Student teachers need to be technologically savvy in this 21st century knowledge society. This will help them produce citizens who add value to the society as a result of their entrepreneurial mindset.

Adoption of information and communications technology (ICT) in teaching practice will help form quality, effective and efficient teachers in teacher education institutions. Some scholars have expressed the need for technology in teacher education. Technology eases content facilitation and increases students' learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers need to embrace technology (McDonnell, 2013; Katitia, 2015). Drawing from Brown et al., (2018), infusing ICT in teacher education is essential because it horns the technological skills of students in this 21st century knowledge society, and enables them contribute to societal transformation in the labour market. This is in agreement with Collins and Halverson (2009) that emphasized the potentials of ICT in teacher education. The authors considered education as a global common good which should be at the

reach of everybody, and ICT has made it possible. Therefore, adoption of information and communications technology in teacher education is paramount in adding value to learners' experiences. It is part of innovative practices in teacher education practicum. Teachers and students are encouraged to use ICT for effective service delivery in the classroom. This invariably enhances learning outcome and fulfilment in learning experiences in teacher education (Sardar, 2020).

Teacher education is faced with some constraints especially in the employment of innovative practices in the pedagogical approach regarding practicum; teaching practice. Technophobia is one of the main constraints. As part of innovative practice, it has been observed that some teachers and teacher trainees find it difficult to make use of technology productively in teaching and learning. PowerPoint presentation for example, which stimulates learner's interest in learning is difficult for some teacher trainees to prepare. Furthermore, when some ICT facilities are available for use in the process of teaching and learning, it has been observed that sometimes, they are not accessible due to the fact that they are not connected to the internet (Oluoch-Suleh & Osuji, 2018).

The need for teachers to be professionally trained is imperative to achieving the goals of teacher education. The specific objectives of teacher education in Nigeria according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), (2014) are: to produce teachers who are motivated, conscious of their duties, and effective in instructional delivery; to encourage innovation and creativity in the teachers; to enhance teacher's commitment in the society; to help teachers adapt to the dynamic society by inculcating in them knowledge and skills they need for their work; and to motivate teachers in their teaching profession. Having knowledge of these stated objectives of the teacher education; one would first ask to what extent have the teacher training institutions achieved these objectives in their instructional delivery especially during practicums; teaching practice they expose the student teachers to?

The period of teaching practice enables the student teacher to pay maximum attention to teaching and learning resources used in helping boost the knowledge and skills of learners. The training of teachers for enhanced standard of instruction is schools especially in teaching and learning is the goal of teacher education (Geduld & Sathorar, 2016). Therefore, for the student teacher to be more effective in class, the adequate selection and preparation of teaching and learning resources that suits the objectives of the lesson and the interest of the learner should be given prominent place.

Teaching practice is a pre-service training provided to help shape the pedagogical horn of the student teacher. Apart from enabling the student teacher to adopt the best pedagogy for their professional training as teachers, it helps them to be creative in the selection, preparation, and utilization of teaching and learning resources for enhanced academic performance of the learners (Osuji & Oluoch-Suleh, 2017). It is worthy to note that poor performance of students in any standardized examination is as result of not only the poor methodology of the teacher, but also failure to make use of adequate teaching and learning resources in the teaching and learning process (Mahabeer, 2018). Therefore, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and help the learners to be focused in class, there is need for proper selection, preparation, and utilization of teaching and learning resources (Nomlomo & Sosibo, 2016).

Teaching practice is one of the most integral components of teacher training in any educational institution. It grants student teachers experience in the actual teaching and learning environment (Kruger & Muller, 2020). Hence during teaching practice, a student teacher is given the opportunity to try the art of teaching before actually getting into the real world of the teaching profession. Further, student teachers endeavour to inculcate the value of teaching practice and perceive teaching practice as the crux of their preparation for the teaching profession since, it provides for the real interface between student-hood and professional membership (Graham, 2016). It is also an experience that creates a mixture of anticipation, anxiety, excitement and apprehension to the student teachers as they commence their teaching practice (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2013).

In the same vein, Maraias and Meier (2014) asserted that teaching practice represents a range of experiences to which student teachers are exposed to when they work in classrooms and schools. They further argued that teaching practice is a challenging but important part of teacher training, especially in developing countries, where the effectiveness of the teaching practice can be diminished or eroded by a range of challenges, such as geographical distance, low and uneven levels of teachers expertise, a wide-ranging lack of teaching and learning resources as well as lack of discipline among a wide cross-section of learners and educators. These

challenges if not addressed, may affect student teachers performance during teaching practice and may in the long run affect their perception of the teaching profession.

Consequently, teaching practice is meant to provide for the authentic context within which student teachers are exposed to experience the complexities and richness of the reality of being a teacher. This process then gives the student teacher an opportunity to establish whether the right career choice has been made or not. Drawing from this, Osuji and Oluoch-Suleh (2017) considered teaching practice as the starting point in the teaching profession, in which the cooperating teacher and the college supervisor bestow their faith as well as their wisdom in helping the student teacher to become a full pledged teacher. Hence teaching practice is one of the long standing methods of assessing student teachers who wish to become professional teachers. Teaching practice is also an opportunity to familiarize with conditions under which the students will work as trained professionals (Calderhead & Shorrock, 2015).

During teaching practice, student teachers are required always to prepare good schemes of work and lesson plans and then select suitable teaching and learning resources that fit in their lesson content and use it in the classroom for optimal classroom instruction. Teaching and learning resources are essential instruments in the teaching and learning process in this 21st century knowledge society. They should be use often in order to reinforce lesson content because they enhance effective teaching and learning (Gandeebo, 2014). In addition, the teaching and learning resources when integrated well with the lesson content help to make classroom learning interesting and help the learners to participate actively since they are able to interact with the resources. More so, the learners are able to retain what they have learnt in class for a longer time and are able to understand better the lesson content. Hence, the need to have criteria in the selection and preparation of teaching and learning resources for the good of the learners.

In every activity in which human beings wish to undertake successfully, they must make very good prior preparations. Therefore when it comes to teaching and learning, the teachers are required to prepare themselves very well before going to the classroom. One among the many things they should prepare is the teaching and learning resources which are essential part of the learning process. If these teaching and learning resources are prepared early and planned on how they will be integrated with the lesson content, they add value to the lesson and reinforce learning, thus making the learners to be attentive to every step and participate actively.

When preparing teaching and learning resources, Macharia, Githua and Mboroki (2019) urged student teachers to use some criteria which will help them to prepare suitable teaching and learning resources that meet the needs of the learners. This criterion entails the use of some planning questions which the student teachers should ask themselves when preparing teaching and learning resources. The first question the student teacher should ask themself is whether the teaching and learning resource is needed. If yes, the student teacher should go ahead and look for a relevant teaching resource which satisfies the felt need appropriately and if it is not available the student teacher should use creative skills learnt at school to improvise one. The second planning question which the student teacher should also put into consideration is how the teaching and learning resource will be used. The student teacher then has to decide on whether the teaching and learning resource is to be used for presenting new information or to describe new skills. In support of this, Patel and Mukwa (2013) argued that the presentation of new information or skills will require a detailed explanation with many examples and practice exercise in order to enhance effective teaching and learning. The third planning question is the type of learners to whom the teaching resource will be needed. This means that the student teacher should have in mind the entry behaviour of the learners they intend to use the teaching resource on. This is because, the student teacher needs to build their ideals on what their learners already know. Finally, when preparing teaching and learning resources, the student teachers should ensure that the teaching and learning resource aims at helping the learners to acquire sustainable knowledge and skills regarding the topic of the day.

In conclusion, when preparing teaching and learning resources Osuji and Oluoch-Suleh (2017) proposed to the student teachers to seek the opinions of their colleagues on the nature and effectiveness of their teaching resource by asking them about their views. For example they could ask questions like: what do you think about the message conveyed by my teaching resource? Is it appealing? Offensive? Boring? Overloaded? Appropriate? Or effective? After getting the views of colleagues, the student teacher should revise the teaching and learning resource once more and then incorporate the good suggestions given by their colleagues.

The selection and preparation of teaching and learning resources is not without some challenges. It has been noted by many researchers that student teachers face a lot of challenges especially when it comes to preparation of teaching and learning resources. For example, Maraias and Meier (2014) conducted a research on the experiences of student teachers during teaching practice and discovered that, one of those many experiences was on the challenges student teachers encountered in preparing teaching and learning resources. The results of the study revealed that, most schools where the student teachers did their teaching practice did not have enough or no teaching resources to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

In the same vein, Gandeebo (2014) confirmed the existence of the same challenge in their research on the experiences of teacher trainees in the rural secondary schools in Ghana where the researcher personally observed student teachers frustrated and lamenting about the challenges they encountered with little or no teaching resources to content with. Furthermore, Macharia, Githua and Mboroki (2019) in their research noted that the student teachers faced the challenge of integrating the lesson content with proper teaching resource within the specified period of time and sometimes the message was not well understood by the learners. This implies that, the student teachers lack creative skills on how to integrate and balance between the lesson content and the teaching resource and harmonizing them properly in order to achieve the desired objectives within the specified period of time.

Despite the great importance of teaching and learning resources in the teaching process, research shows that many student teachers are faced with the challenge of scarcity of resources and lack of creative skills in selecting and preparing proper teaching and learning resource that matches with their lesson content, as well as the challenge of integrating it with lesson content within the specified period of time among many other challenges (Osuji & Oluoch-Suleh, 2017). If these challenges are not addressed, Gandeebo (2014) opined that, teaching practice becomes a demoralizing experience. This background therefore gave rise to the key question this current question posed: What is the relevance of innovative practices in the training of teachers in Enugu State, Nigeria?

Statement of the Problem

Practicum is the hallmark of teacher education. Teaching practice, a typical practicum in teacher education provides opportunity for the student teachers to immerse themselves fully in the teaching profession. It shapes the pedagogical horn of the student teachers. Teaching practice enables the student teachers to adopt the best pedagogy for their professional training as teachers. Innovative practices then becomes a clarion call to this task of effectiveness in teacher professional training.

Many stakeholders in the education sector in Enugu State, Nigeria are worried about the quality of teachers being produced in our teacher education institutions. This is seen in the results of some standardized examinations conducted in the State, and the nation as a whole where students' general academic performance continue to decline and some students resort to mutilation of results. It is really a social concern because some crops of teachers produced lack creativity and innovation. This invariably affects the performance of their learners. It is against this backdrop that this current study focused on teaching practice as a practicum in teacher education that could help horn the pedagogical skills of student teachers in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the relevance of innovative practices in teacher education in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study sought to establish the relevance of innovative practices in the training of teachers in Enugu State, Nigeria. It then asked this question: What is the relevance of innovative practices in the training of teachers in Enugu State, Nigeria?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

The current study adopted a qualitative research paradigm. It specifically employed case study.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in the Faculty of Education of Godfrey Okoye University Enugu, Nigeria. The university is a faith-based private university owned and managed by the Catholic Diocese of Enugu, Nigeria. The Faculty of Education of the university has five departments namely; Educational Foundations, Arts Education, Science and Computer Education, Vocational Education, and Social Sciences Education. The study was conducted at the postgraduate school of the university in the department of Educational Foundations.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study comprised 25 postgraduate Diploma of Education students of 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 academic sessions who were involved in teaching practice at Godfrey Okoye University Secondary School. The total population was studied because they were of manageable size. Therefore, no sampling was done.

Data and Sources of Data

Observation guide was used to collect data. The instrument focused on lesson preparation, introduction, lesson development, use of instructional aids, classroom management and procedures, teacher variables, and evaluation. The data collection instrument was subjected to face validation. Specialists in measurement and evaluation, and curriculum studies keenly looked at the instrument and made their observations. Their comments were effected in the final copy of the instrument. The instrument was then subjected to pilot testing to the undergraduate students on teaching practice for reliability. The reason for using the undergraduate students was because of the similar characteristics they share with the postgraduate students regarding teaching practice. More, so, almost the same lecturers were teaching both the undergraduate and postgraduate students. For data collection, observation of the student teachers was done physically in the classroom. Three research assistants helped in data collection.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed qualitatively. The data were interpreted narratively following the focal areas of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethically, the consent of the students were sought before the study. Despite being their teaching practice supervisors, they were told that the observations from their classes would be shared with the general public for knowledge transfer. They granted the request and freely participated in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Teaching practice is the major practicum in teacher education. It is one of the hallmarks of teacher trainees in their training. Teaching practice is carried out in the physical classroom or simulated or virtual classroom. The essence of this practicum is the qualitative formation of the student teacher so as to be more effective in the field. Drawing from the qualitative observation, the study disclosed the following:

Preparation: In preparing for the lesson, the researchers focused on the appropriateness of action verbs used in stating learning objectives, the format of the lesson plan, the ratio of the objectives to themes covered in the lesson note, the content validity of the lesson note, and the sequence and logical presentation of the lesson note. In making use of good action verbs such as define, explain, relate, demonstrate, write, just to mention a few in stating the instructional objectives, it was discovered that the student teachers mastered the action verbs well. However, most of the action verbs they used measured the cognitive aspect of learning. Most of the students failed to factor in the affective aspect of learning and the psychomotor aspect of learning in the instructional objectives in most of the lessons they planned.

Introduction: In the introduction, the researchers observed the relevance of entry behaviour to the present lesson, the test of entry behaviour, the use of set induction, the appropriateness of set induction in arousing students' interest, and the introduction of the lesson of the day. They found that the student teachers were familiar with these practices. They employed them well. However, in their test of entry behaviour, they were still using 'what is…' in asking questions after repeated corrections on using good action verbs such as 'define'…, 'explain' the concept of…in asking questions.

Lesson Development: The specific areas observed in the lesson development were: mastery of subject matter, energy and voice projection, facilitation of subject matter using appropriate teaching method, verbal and non-verbal communication, and use of formative assessment as the lesson develops. It was found that most of the student teachers encountered were knowledgeable on the subject matter. That notwithstanding, the effective facilitation approach was lacking. The student teachers focused on themselves instead of allowing the learners to own the lesson.

Use of Instructional Aids: In this focal area, the researchers observed how the student teachers made use of chalkboard/whiteboard/smart board, the ability of the instructional aid to stimulate and sustain learners' interest, the relevance of the instructional aid provided, the initiative and resourcefulness of the instructional aid provided, and the didactive effect of the instructional aid provided. The researchers found that the student teachers utilize instructional aids in the teaching and learning process, but many a time, they lacked innovativeness. The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in their teaching and learning process was lacking.

Classroom Management and Procedures: The focal areas here were time management, distribution of questions, encouragement of students' participation, use of varied reinforcement techniques, and movement around the classroom. The student teachers were conscious of these areas. There was a lot of improvement from their microteaching period to their teaching practice time. However, some failed to use gamification as an innovative practice, or ICT in engaging learners actively in class.

Teacher Variables: The researchers observed the dressing code of the student teachers, their comportment and confidence, their motivation, the quality of feedback and remediation, and their attitude towards supervision. It was found that microteaching they did before coming for teaching practice helped the student teachers to be confident enough and generally, their dressing code was encouraging. They were eager to be supervised and they accepted the feedback given to them positively.

Evaluation: The researchers observed how the student teachers used questioning skills to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the learners. The study also looked at the attainment of the lesson objectives or strands. Special attention was paid on the matching of the evaluation items based on specific learning objectives. Lastly, the researchers observed the quality of closure by the end of the lesson episode. It was discovered that the student teachers initially during the microteaching sessions were not evaluating the learners based on the specific learning objectives. However, after series of corrections and encouragement, they learnt that what should be evaluated were the specified learning objectives. Therefore, when they went for teaching practice, it was easier for them. This enabled them to ascertain whether the learners met the objectives or not.

Discussion of Findings

The qualitative observation adopted in this study has helped the researchers to establish the relevance of innovative practices in teacher education. Teaching practice is a major practicum in teacher education that enables student teachers to be effective and grounded in their profession as teachers. Therefore, innovative practices in teacher education is helpful in enhancing sustained learning outcomes.

The study revealed that in the preparation of the lesson the most of the student teachers focused only on the cognitive aspect of learning relegating the affective and the psychomotor aspects to the background. Furthermore, in lesson introduction, the student teachers were aware of some innovative practices that could help motivate or set induce learners for the lesson. They applied them, but lacked effective facilitation of the lesson. It was also revealed that the student teachers didn't do much especially in the area of the application

of ICT, and gamification in the classroom. Lastly, the student teachers had positive attitude towards teaching practice supervision.

The findings tried to underscore the relevance of innovative practices in teacher education. That when innovative practices such as blended learning, gamification, collaborative learning, reflective teaching, just to mention a few are used in class, then learners are energized to learn, they are motivated and it enables them to perform well academically. This agrees with Norr (2014) that innovative practices improves teacher education, and empowers the learner. Similarly, the findings concur with Krishna (2014) that role play, blended learning, use of ICT, simulation help to build confidence in the learner and enhances quality teacher education. Furthermore, the findings relate to the assertions of Filippos (2022) that the use of innovative practices in teacher education helps improves the teacher's competencies and learning outcome of the learners. The findings also strengthens the study of Arslan (2021) that innovative practices in teacher education especially in teaching practice engages learners effectively and actively in class.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The relevance of innovative practices in the professional training of teachers remain imperative in teacher education Institutions in Enugu State, Nigeria. Teacher education produces the human resources needed for societal transformation. Practicum is a hallmark to teacher education. Teaching practice one of the practicums in teacher education enables the student teacher to be effective in the teaching profession. The current study has disclosed that innovative practices are essential in lesson preparation, introduction of the lesson, lesson development, use of instructional aids, classroom management and procedures, teacher variables, and evaluation.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the researchers make the following recommendations:
1) Student teachers should pay much attention, develop keen interest and employ innovative practices in their professional training.
2) Student teachers should make their lessons to be learner centred all the time by encouraging active participation of learners in the class.
3) Student teachers should vary their teaching methods to include mostly collaborative learning.
4) Students teachers should adopt blended learning approach in class and use instructional aids especially information and communications technology effectively.
5) Teacher education institutions should avail student teachers to at least 12 weeks of thoroughly supervised teaching practice.
6) Teacher education institutions should provide and make accessible adequate innovative technological equipment and facilities for optimal instructional service delivery.

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