



TRAINING AND MENTORING FOR TRAINEE TEACHERS IN VOCATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

AMESI, J. Ph.D

NDUKWE, C. I.

*Department of Business Education
Faculty of Technical and Science Education
Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo
Port Harcourt, Rivers State
E-mail: joyamesi2016@gmail.com*

Abstract

The study investigated training and mentoring for trainee teachers in vocational business education programme in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Two research questions were posed to guide the study and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population consisted of 810 final year students out of which 324 were sampled using simple random sampling technique. Data for this study were collected by means of questionnaire titled “Training and Mentoring for Trainee Teachers in Vocational Business Education Programme in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State Questionnaire (TMTTVBEPTIRSQ)”. A total of 310 final year students who returned their instrument were studied. The questionnaire adopted a four point rating scale. Test-re-test method was used to test the reliability of the items and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions while t-test for large group mean was used to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed that trainee teachers see teaching practice as an opportunity to acquire and develop skills as a result of mentoring and training in their various institutions of learning, the respondents also indicated that they had benefitted from training and mentoring during teaching practice exercise. The findings from the hypotheses proved that there is no significant difference in the responses of the respondents on skills acquired and mentoring received during teaching practice. Based on the findings and conclusion made, recommendation amongst others includes that vocational business educators should ensure that the students in vocational education acquire adequate skills and receive effective mentoring before embarking on teaching practice exercise and effective training and mentoring should be given to students in vocational business education programme as to enable them acquire the skills needed for teaching practice.

Key Words: Training, Mentoring, Trainee Teachers, Vocational Business Education, Programme

Introduction

Training is all about development modified to fit position, industry, job duties and career plans. Training can be done in different ways and form like traineeships (teaching practice) for skilled trades and mentoring onboarding for professional occupations. Training or mentoring programmes are flexible in terms of time and amount of instruction they provide. Traineeships and onboarding are for shorter, defined periods. Job shadowing and mentor-mentee relationships can support continuous employee development over an extended period. Teaching practice is a crucial aspect of teacher preparatory programme in vocational business education and in Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities and Rivers State in particular. Teaching practice is the period when student teachers are aided to put into practice the theories and principles of education which they have learnt in the classroom as they



teach students in the partnership schools (Ogonor & Badmus, 2006). Samuel (2010) viewed teaching practice as far back as the first model of teacher education, the master apprenticeship model, in which the novice teacher learns best through behavioural modeling and through imitating the expert teacher. Nwanekezi, Okoli and Mezieobi (2011) opined that teaching practice is the name for preparation of student-teacher or trainee teacher for teaching by practical training. However, teaching practice is a professional exercise which is focused on helping the trainee-teacher to bridge the gap between theory and practice in education and develop competence as well (Endeley, 2014).

Ogonor and Badmus (2006) in Omoniyi and Adedapo (2012) depicts that supervision of teaching practice is of necessity as it is often not thoroughly done as supervisors seem more interested in students' scores thus paying little concern to inter-personal discussion at the end of the teaching period. It is not uncommon for supervisors to assess trainee teachers' performance by mere reading through the prepared notes of lessons. Teaching practice is an important stage in the professional development of teachers. It provides an opportunity for pre-service teachers to apply the knowledge and theories learned on vocational business education to the real classroom (Owusu & Brown, 2014). Bourdillion in Azeem (2011) opined that teaching practice goes beyond just knowing what to teach and knowing how to teach and the purpose of teaching practice is to develop several competencies in the trainee teacher as it includes interpersonal, pedagogical, intercultural and psychological competencies.

Mentorship is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. However, true mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialogue, and challenge. According to Allen, Eby and Lentz (2006), mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psycho-social support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career or professional development. Mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé)" (Pompa, 2012; Nwanewezi & Akpomi, 2009). According to Endeley (2014), the best teacher education programmes provide many opportunities for students to spend time in real classrooms under the supervision of an experienced mentor. In such a situation, the competencies the students acquire, the quality of supervision and time spent on teaching practice may be limited thus affecting the quality of teachers being trained.

Vocational business education is a unique discipline, because it provides a focus for convergence of technologies and training in business education. Its uniqueness naturally defines its role and dictates its increasing relevance in several disciplines and modern practices. Trainee teachers are equipped in the programme and are thus encouraged to function as trainee teachers, research and engage in collaborative projects in wide professional contexts. Vocational business education has a closer and more direct link with economic and professional development. Sequel to this growth,



teachers and trainee teachers are required to respond to a strategic manner to the changes which take place in order to benefit from the economic growth. They have to take drastic measures to upgrade their knowledge or skills and adapt the qualification of their trainees (Mouzakitis, 2010).

Training

Training represents a prime opportunity to expand the knowledge base of all the trainee teachers in vocational business education, but many trainee teachers find the development opportunities expensive. Trainee teachers do not miss out while attending teaching practice exercise as it is part of the criterion for completion of their programme in vocational business education. The importance of training in vocational could be viewed as thus:

Addressing weakness: Most trainee teachers have some weakness in their various programme as they do not value skill courses taught by their teacher. A training programme allows training teachers to strengthen those skills that each trainer needs to improve. It brings all trainee teachers to a higher level so that they all have similar skills and knowledge. Providing the necessary training creates an overall knowledgeable supervisor with trainee teachers who can take over for one another as needed, teach on teams or teach independently without constant help and supervision from others.

Improved trainee teachers performance: A vocational business education student who receives the necessary training is better able to perform his or her job effectively. He or she becomes more aware of teaching practice exercise and proper procedures for the tasks. The training obtain in vocational business education may build the trainee teacher's confidence because he or she has a stronger understanding of the exercise and the responsibilities required for the exercise (teaching practice). This confidence may push the trainee teachers to perform even better and think of new ideas that help him or her to excel.

Examples of Training

The following examples of training are commendable:-

Formal instruction: Formal instruction describes lecture-style training carried out in a classroom setting where an expert teacher explains concepts that the trainee must know. Lecture-style instruction allows an institution to train trainee teachers at the same time and ensures that each trainee teacher has a similar training experience. It also gives trainee teachers the opportunity to clarify points that may be unclear with the teacher before moving on. On the other hand, formal instruction can be costly due to the practical involved to train the trainee teachers at a time.

On the job training: On the job training involves a trainee teacher learning how to perform a task by actually doing it, while receiving guidance from an experienced teacher or supervisor in his or her place of primary assignment. This method can be advantageous because it allows a trainee teacher to learn by performing the actual tasks that has been assigned to him or her on the process of training, meaning the trainee teacher is productive while he or she is at the field.



Traineeship: When a seasoned business educator teaches a relatively inexperienced vocational business education student how to perform during teaching practice exercise, it becomes traineeship. This is usually skill-based training that involves learning processes or procedures for vocational business education students. An example of traineeship training is when a student in vocational business education is taught courses relating to methods of teaching at year three as preparatory for qualification for teaching practice exercise. A trainee teacher can become a teacher after graduation, due to the training acquired in vocational business education.

Mentoring

The term 'mentoring' appeared first in Horner's *Odyssey*, a Greek mythology in which a wise and trusted guide, Mentor, looked after and guided Telemachus son of Odysseus, who had left home to fight in the Trojan war. To a major degree, Mentor was responsible for the boy's education as well the shaping of his character, wisdom of his decisions and the clarity and steadfastness of his purpose (Barondess, 1991). This historical context has informed the definitions of mentoring across decades. Hence, mentoring is usually considered a relationship between an older or more experienced person and a younger or less experienced person for the purpose of developing the younger person professionally, academically or personally (Levison, 1978; Kram, 1985; Donaldson, Ensher & Grant-Vallone, 2000 and McKimm; Jollie & Hatter, 2003).

In tertiary institutions, the teaching practice exercise provides an opportunity where the mentors (Vocational Business Educators) provides direction and guidance with a view to helping the mentee (trainee teachers) develop necessary skills, navigate work place, politics and improve performance (McKimm; Jollie & Hatter, 2003). The exercise last for a period of weeks or months depending on the institution programme exposing the trainee teachers to the actual field of work. Teaching practice, therefore, becomes an avenue in the educational system for preparing teachers by training and mentoring them with the needed knowledge and skills for quality teaching. According to Gujjar, Naoreen, Saifi and Bajwa (2010), teaching practice ought to be the central pivot of the professional training. This becomes imperative as the attributes of quality business educators include possessing pedagogical knowledge, subject content knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for effective teaching, strong sense of ethics, and capacity for renewal and ongoing learning (Maarof, 2007).

Research has shown that a mentor or supervisor have considerable influence on the performance of the student teacher during teaching practice. To emphasize the importance of a mentor, Marais and Meier (2004) pointed out that in as much as student teachers expressed their experience of practical training through a range of interactions and relationships such as with staff, learners, fellow students, and university lecturers; a major prerequisite for learning is the student teachers' relationship with the supervisor. This statement is also in line with the findings gained from numerous investigations that mentors have a great influence on the development of student teacher's orientation, disposition, conceptions and classroom practice (Farrell, Walker & Gahan, 2000; Quick & Sieborger, 2005).



McGee and Fraser (2001) in their working with teachers in practice assert that mentor teachers are responsible for the instructional programme and also for guiding the activities of the trainee teachers. Therefore to function as a mentor one must be qualified and experienced in the teaching field. Mentors assess their student teachers' daily activities, including assisting them to solve classroom situations when they arise, holding conferences with them and evaluating their performance over time. Hence, they have firsthand knowledge of their supervisees or mentees, skills, immediate access to dialogue, and opportunities for observing whether any improvements are being made or remain to be made (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004).

Statement of the problem

Vocational Business Education is increasingly challenged with many complex problems. According to Egbo (2010), there is a general outcry that the standards in vocational business education are falling and morals flagging. Some blame lecturers for this apparent decline in quality of training and moral values, others blame the students. Lecturers as a group blame parents and their children, and also the government for not funding vocational business education programme and poor physical facilities in some parts. The researchers observed that there are little or no skills acquired by the trainee teachers during teaching practice exercise and mentoring received. Consequently, the researchers need to ascertain the training and mentoring for trainee teachers in vocational business education programme.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study was to investigate the training and mentoring for trainee teachers in vocational business education programme in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The study sought to

1. Ascertain the skills acquired by the trainee teachers and mentoring received during teaching practice exercise in vocational business education programme.
2. Ascertain the benefits of training and mentoring trainee teachers gained during teaching practice exercise in vocational business education programme.

Research Questions

Two basic questions guided the study.

1. What are the skills acquired by the trainee teachers and mentoring received during teaching practice exercise?
2. What are the benefits of training and mentoring trainee teachers gained during teaching practice exercise?



Hypotheses

In this study, two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female trainee teachers on skills acquired and mentoring received during teaching practice exercise.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female trainee teachers on the benefits of training and mentoring gained during teaching practice exercise.

Method

The study area was Rivers State of Nigeria. The design of the study was descriptive survey and the population was 810 final year students, within the scope of the research. The entire population was not studied by the researchers as 40 percent of the total population was sampled giving a total of 324 students. The institutions studied by the researcher were Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku. The researchers did not discriminate between degree and non-degree awarding institutions. Details of the population are shown below. Data for the study were collected by means of questionnaire developed by the researchers from insight gained from reviewed work. The questionnaire has two parts – “A” and “B”. Part A sought information on the background of the respondents, and it contained four items. Part B sought information on the view of the students regarding the study with 15 question items. The questionnaire adopted a four point rating scale. The researchers distributed the questionnaire to the respondents with accompany letter. In all, 310 copies out of the 324 copies of the questionnaire sent out were retrieved, which amounts to 96 percent return rate. The initial copy of the questionnaire was face and content, validated by 6 lecturers. Test-re-test method was used to test the reliability of the items and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions and t-test for large group mean was used to test the hypotheses.

Table 1: Population Distribution

S/No	Tertiary Institutions	Final Year Students
1.	Rivers State University	248
2.	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	195
3.	Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku	367
	Total	810

Source: RSU, IAUE and FCE (T) Teaching Practice Coordinators, 2017

Results

The result obtained from the respondents is shown below:

Research Question 1: What are the skills acquired by the trainee teachers and mentoring received during teaching practice exercise?

Table 2: Skills Acquired by Trainee Teachers and Mentoring Received During Teaching Practice Exercise



S/N	Items	\bar{x}	S.D	Remark
1.	Ability to introduce the topic and achieve the outcomes at the end of the lesson	3.32	0.86	Acquired
2.	Ability to motivate and arouse interest in learners when teaching	2.61	1.18	Acquired
3.	Ability to use main language of instruction to explain, describe and discuss key concept in course of teaching	2.73	1.06	Acquired
4.	Effective classroom management	2.43	1.17	Moderately Acquired
5.	Ability to provide opportunities for reasoning, logic and other higher order of thinking skills	2.14	1.04	Moderately Acquired
6.	Ability to use appropriate teaching strategies, methods and techniques	3.23	0.82	Acquired
7.	Interpersonal relationship between the trainee teachers and their students in their schools of placement	3.09	1.06	Acquired
Total Mean/S.D=		19.55	7.19	
GrandMean/S.D=		2.79	1.03	Acquired

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The result in Table 2 shows that out of the seven question items on the skills acquired by the trainee teachers and mentoring received during teaching practice exercise, items 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 with mean scores of 3.32, 2.61, 2.73, 3.23 and 3.09 respectively, indicates that trainee teachers acquired skilled during teaching practice from the training and mentoring received in vocational business education programme in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. However, items 4 and 5 with mean scores of 2.43 and 2.14 revealed that trainee teachers moderately acquired these skills during the teaching practice exercise. The grand mean of 2.79 shows that trainee teachers acquired these skills during teaching practice. Furthermore the standard deviation which ranged between 0.82 and 1.18 indicates closeness in the opinion of the respondents.

Research Question 2: What are the benefits of training and mentoring trainee teachers gained during teaching practice exercise?

Table 3: Benefits of Training and Mentoring Trainee Teachers Gained During Teaching Practice Exercise

S/No	Items	\bar{x}	S.D	Remark
1.	Improve in communication skills	3.44	0.75	Benefitted
2.	Writing skills has improved through daily writing of lesson notes and writing on the chalkboards	3.13	1.12	Benefitted
3.	The feedbacks I received from mentors has improved my teaching effectiveness	2.96	0.82	Benefitted
4.	Teaching practice has broaden my knowledge of how to keep school records such as diary and attendance register	2.31	1.07	Moderately Benefitted
5.	Teaching practice has helped me to know how to relate what was taught during lectures to practice in real life	2.89	1.15	Benefitted



6.	situation Knowledge has been broaden on how to apply teaching and learning principles during instruction in classroom situations	2.82	0.99	Benefitted
7.	Teaching practice influences professional growth of the trainee teachers	2.01	1.04	Moderately Benefitted
8.	Self-satisfactory is derived from teaching practice exercise	2.65	1.11	Benefitted
Total Mean/S.D=		22.22	7.95	
GrandMean/S.D=		2.78	0.99	Benefitted

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The result in Table 3 proves that out of the eight question items on the benefits of training and mentoring trainee teachers gained during teaching practice exercise, items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 with mean scores of 3.44, 3.13, 2.96, 2.89, 2.82 and 2.65 respectively, indicates that trainee teachers benefitted from the training and mentoring received during teaching practice exercise. However, items 4 and 7 with mean scores of 2.31 and 2.01 revealed that trainee teachers moderately benefitted from the training and mentoring received during the teaching practice exercise. The grand mean of 2.78 shows that trainee teachers benefitted from the training and mentoring received during teaching practice. Furthermore the standard deviation which ranged between 0.75 and 1.15 indicates closeness in the opinions of the respondents.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female trainee teachers on skills acquired and mentoring received during teaching practice exercise.

Table 4: t-test of Difference of Final Year Vocational Business Education Students on Skills Acquired and Mentoring Received During Teaching Practice Exercise

Trainee Teachers	Mean	S.D	Num.	Df	Std. Error	t-Cal	t-Crit.	Remark
Female	11.20	4.11	310	308	0.41	6.95	1.96	Rejected
Male	8.35	3.08						

* Significant at 0.05 level of significance

The analysis in Table 4 reveal the t-test of difference of final year vocational business education students on the skills acquired and mentoring received during teaching practice. The t-cal value of 6.95 greater than the t-critical value of 1.96, is an indication that the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference in the mean rating of trainee teachers on skills acquired and mentoring received during teaching practice in vocational business education programme in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.



Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female trainee teachers on the benefits of training and mentoring gained during teaching practice exercise.

Table 5: t-test of Difference of Final Year Vocational Business Education Students on the Benefits of Training and Mentoring Gained during Teaching Practice Exercise

Trainee Teachers	Mean	S.D	Num.	Df	Std. Error	t-Cal	t-Crit.	Remark
Female	12.10	4.56	310	308	0.45	4.40	1.96	Rejected
Male	10.12	3.39						

** Significant at 0.05 level of significance*

The analysis in Table 5 reveal the t-test of difference of final year vocational business education students on the benefits of training and mentoring gained during teaching practice exercise. The t-cal value of 4.40 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96, is an indication that the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference in the mean rating of trainee teachers on the benefits of training and mentoring gained during teaching practice in vocational business education programme in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Discussion

Findings in Table 2 revealed that trainee teachers see teaching practice as an opportunity to acquire and develop skills as a result of mentoring and training in their various institutions of learning. The findings indicated that student teachers see teaching practice as helping them to develop communicative skills and improve their writing skills. The student teachers also viewed that teaching practice improved their knowledge of teaching methods when they observe their mentors teach in classroom situation, it has helped to expose them to the rudiments of teaching. The finding of this study concurs with Andabai (2013)opined that teaching practice impacted positively on trainee teachers greatly since they were able to build confidence and competence in lesson preparation and developed skills and attitudes of a teacher. In agreement with Andabai, Mostafa cited in Wambugu, Barmao and Ng'eno (2013) who depicted that teaching practice affords student teachers opportunity to develop their potentials so as to perform their future roles as teachers with lots of precision. Potentials of student teachers such as critical thinking, problem-solving skills, lesson planning skills and classroom control could be developed during teaching practice exposure. The finding also lends credence with the views of Wambulet al (2013), that teaching practice help trainee teachers to become better teachers as well as afford them opportunity to reflect on their teaching. The researchers noted that during teaching practice exercise, trainee teachers develop skills and knowledge that makes them effective teachers.



Findings in Table 3 show that the respondents in this study indicated that they had benefited from training and mentoring during their teaching practice exercise. However, all respondents felt that in as much as the theory acquired in their various institutions provided them with enough information on how to teach, it was the teaching practice that introduced them to and gave them the exposure into the experiences of the real teaching world. In line with the finding, Endeley (2014) opined that the best teacher education programmes provide many opportunities for students to spend time in real classrooms under the supervision of an experienced mentor (Business Educator). In agreement with Endeley, the researchers viewed that teaching practice provides student teachers with the opportunity to integrate the theory of education with that which they are experiencing at first hand, teaching practice adds meaning to this knowledge when a trainee teacher comes into contact with the real classroom situation. It is during teaching practice that knowledge is affirmed by the students (trainee teachers).

Findings from the hypotheses proved that there is significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents on skills acquired and mentoring received during teaching practice and benefits of training and mentoring. Both hypotheses were rejected in favour of the alternative. The result shows that even though the students had gained experience during teaching practice, they need to be taught and mentored effectively and it is only this that their skills can be improved. It is also necessary for business educators to mentor and train their students adequately so that when they go for teaching practice exercise, it will not be new to them anymore and they can also impact what they have learnt to the students and fellow colleague in the place they find themselves as trainee teachers.

Conclusion

The study dealt with training and mentoring for trainee teachers in vocational business education programme in tertiary institutions in River State. The study revealed that trainee teachers view teaching practice as an important component in their training because it exposes them to the actual teaching and learning environment in which they can contextualize their theoretical knowledge gained during training and mentoring. It also affords mentees an opportunity to determine whether the appropriate career choice has been made or not as the mentees indicated that the mentors were supportive and always willing to share their valuable advice and skills as they were able to acquire more skills during their teaching practice exercise.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward by the researchers:

1. Business educators should be constantly empowered through workshops in vocational business education programme in tertiary institutions, to work effectively in leading and guiding trainee teachers.
2. Vocational business educators should ensure that the students in vocational education acquire adequate skills and receive effective mentoring before embarking on teaching practice exercise.



3. Effective training and mentoring should be given to students in vocational business education programme as to enable them acquire the skills needed for teaching practice.

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