

## Practicum Exercise and The Attitudes of Pre-Service Educational Administrators in Cross River State

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### Abstract

This study was aimed at examining “practicum exercise and the attitudes of pre-service educational administrators in Cross River State.” Pre-administrators’ attitudes were assessed in the area of self-discipline, time management, and record keeping. Three null hypotheses formulated offered direction to the study. The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design. Pre-service administrators with practicum experience were the experimental group while those without practicum experience were the control group. Cluster and simple random sampling techniques were adopted in selecting 60 final year students and 60 year three students or its equivalent out of a population of 220 final year and 208 year three students or its equivalent, from both NUC and CES programmes respectively. The instrument used for data collection was Practicum Exercise, Study Habits, and Record-Keeping Abilities Questionnaire (PESDTMARKAQ). Independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance using Microsoft Excel 2013 Data analysis tool pack. The results of the study showed that practicum exercise had no effect on pre-service administrators’ self-discipline and record keeping attitudes; Practicum exercise was found to affect time management attitudes of pre-service educational administrators. Based on these findings, it was recommended among several others that; pre-service administrators with practicum experience should make efforts to develop the level of their self-discipline by enacting and obeying personal policies that are favorable to their academic growth and progress.

**Keywords:** Practicum; Self-discipline; Time Management; Recordkeeping; Attitudes, Educational Administrators.

### Introduction

Practicum is a very important aspect of administration. It is a platform offered to undergraduates to spend a minimum of six weeks in any formal organization as a means of observing professional administrators and teachers, practicing, and carrying out administrative duties which are in line with learned principles, ethics, doctrines, and theories of administration. The word ‘practicum’ also refers to internship, work experience, placement, etc. depending on the user or place of usage. It is a field experience offered to undergraduates or students, as a means of enabling them link theory with practice. It provides students with the practical realities of the knowledge acquired or learned verbally in the University. Practicum offers students the opportunity to function effectively by carrying out duties in their areas of specialty. For the pre-service administrators, the practical knowledge gathered during this period will lead them to the actual performance of communicative, disciplinary, human relations, motivation, punishment, and other administrative duties.

The teaching practicum experience is also a critical part of the pre-service teacher's training as it is often the teacher's first experience in a real school setting as well. The duration of this experience usually varies based on institutions or departments.

According to Norina, Sariwati & Zurah (2013), Industrial internship is an important part of an academic curriculum in higher education institutions. An internship is an opportunity for undergraduate students to incorporate work-related experience and knowledge into their formal education in a university by taking part in supervised and planned work in real-world professional environments. It is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent (NACE, 2011). Stewart (2017), said that Practicums are designed to provide students with practical work experience. He emphasized the importance of learning by doing, where students can transfer their knowledge to actual work. He added that a decade ago, having a good academic standing was enough to qualify you for a decent job, but today, good grades don't count. When it comes to securing employment, most companies want to make sure you can put what you learned to practice.

Practicums allow students to earn real hands-on experience with the best in the industry. Participation in an internship program offers many benefits to an undergraduate student. First, it allows a student to make and develop professional contacts. Second, both full and part-time employment offers become available. Third, students can develop a greater understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. Fourth, students can refine their career goals. Internship programs also hold benefits for the field supervisors and sponsoring organizations, such as providing motivated workers at no or relatively low cost to an organization and furnishing the opportunity to train possible future employees for the organization. Participation in internship programs allows the field supervisor and organization to maintain a working relationship with the university in which the students are enrolled (Seibert & Sypher, 1989).

The importance of practicum exercise to the development of undergraduates cannot be overemphasized from the above. It plays an integral role by acting as a bridge linking theoretical perspectives to practical experiences. The purpose of field experiences is to provide students with real-world experiences while they are learning how to become effective school administrators. Field experiences provide students with opportunities to practice and develop a good interpersonal relationship, small group administration, consultation, collaboration, and teamwork, advocacy, and leadership skills taught in their routine coursework. Thus, students practice consultation, collaboration, advocacy, and leadership skills as they progress from practicum to the actualization of real-life administration.

### **Problem Statement**

Practicum exercise should offer students a privilege to put into practice, learned ideas and open them up to the realities of record keeping, office management and practice, and other important managerial duties. It also should expose pre-service educational administrators to practical roots of what they are expected to do after they graduate or when they assume different offices in their workplace. The practical knowledge so obtained from practicum, will guide them

(students) into the necessary insights of planning, organizing, coordinating, budgeting and other administrative functions. The exercise should make students management time, human and material resources effectively for the realization of set goals.

Unfortunately, this important exercise has not been observed to have had any change in the behavior of those who embarked on it and who were supposed to be the direct recipients of its benefits. Only a handful of undergraduates can boast to have had a change in their managerial skills after embarking on this exercise, while the majority of the students who also took part in the exercise remain unchanged. As a matter of fact, many undergraduates who embarked on this exercise, have also been observed to be indifferent from those who did not take part in the exercise.

One will expect any undergraduate who just completed a practical field exercise to be burning with a high zeal for excellence through self-discipline and proper management of resources for self-excellence. It is this observed indifference in the behavior of undergraduates after completing such an exercise that necessitated this study. The major concern for this study has resulted to this question: to what extent does self-discipline, time management, record keeping attitude of students differ between those who had engaged in practicum exercises and those who had not? An attempt to answer this question makes this study germane.

### **Purpose of the study**

Generally, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of practicum exercise and the attitudes of pre-service educational administrators in Cross River State. Specifically, this study sought to:

- i. Determine whether there is a significant difference in self-discipline attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience.
- ii. Determine whether there is a significant difference in time management attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience.
- iii. Determine whether there is a significant difference in record keeping attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience

### **Research Questions**

The research questions below were posed to guide the study.

- i. To what extent does pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience differ in their self-discipline attitudes from those without practicum experience?
- ii. To what extent does pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience differ in their time management attitudes from those without practicum experience?
- iii. To what extent does pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience differ in their records keeping attitudes from those without practicum experience?

## **Research Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses below were formulated to guide this study.

- i. There is no significant difference in self-discipline attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience.
- ii. There is no significant difference in time management attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience.
- iii. There is no significant difference in record keeping attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience.

## **Literature Review**

The concept of practicum has been explored variously by different researchers in different locations at different times. Some scholars have attempted to offer the meaning of practicum. To some, practicum is an organized school experience of student-teachers, in which student-teacher practices the skills being learned in the teacher education program under the direct supervision and assistance of the trained teacher of the school. An integral part of all initial teacher education programs is the school-based practicum, where pre-service teachers get an opportunity to develop their teaching and knowledge in classroom situations (Grootenboer, 2005). It is a supervised practical experience of on-the-job training (variously known as practicum, clinical training, internship, depending on the discipline) which forms an essential part of the pre-service preparation of professionals across disciplines (Edwin, Keith & Randy, 2007).

Some studies have been conducted to explain the importance of practicum. For example, Ertembo (2006), maintained that generally, it is clear that practical training of student – teachers are considered to be an effective way to acquire practical knowledge. He maintained that evidence has shown that the best way to educate teachers is to give them real experiences of schools and students very near the beginning of their course so that this can inform their future learning. Practicums are intended to help student teachers begin to understand the perplexing experiences of teacher practice, developing complex professional knowledge to become successful teachers (Glazier, 2009).

A study conducted by Mignot (2009) indicated that practicum was not effectively implemented due to factors such as large numbers of student – teachers, inadequate school facilities, lack of clear understanding and commitment among its participants, lack of systematic assessment, and lack of a strong link between the college and placement schools. Thus, the most stressful factors in the implementation of practicum program are inadequate budget, inadequate support, school students' misbehavior, lack of close supervision and follow up, and lack of strong partnership with school (Fekede, 2009).

Studies have also been conducted which suggest ways in which practicum can be supported to achieve its intended objectives. This is because support for student-teachers is an essential factor for their professional development during the practicum program. The guidance, mentoring and feedback that student – teachers receive from their school and college or university instructors play a critical role in their learning and development (Fekede, 2009). Therefore, teacher educators and school teachers need to understand that practicing a teacher has a profound impact on the teacher candidates who are assigned to them during student teaching practice (Wellman and Wold, 2006). In order to meet the purpose of the practicum program, the commitment and constructive feedback that mentors and tutor delivered for

student-teacher is very valuable for their professional development. These new teachers become capable, and well prepared if they get appropriate support during their practicum program from the college/university and school communities (Wellman and Wold, 2006).

From the foregoing, It can be said from the definitions above that some basic features of practicum exercise include the following: It is practical; it is carried out by undergraduates, students, or student – teachers; it is done under the supervision of host teachers, head teachers, and external supervisors from the student –teachers' institution; it has a duration which is determined by the department, faculty or institution organizing it; and the aim is to link theory with practice.

Self-discipline is another key variable of this study. It refers to the ability of an individual to carry out task normatively without any element of deviation. It also refers to one's ability to manage his or her emotions and weaknesses to discharge duties. Self-discipline gives you a way to do what you think is right, regardless of how badly you would rather not. It provides the fuel for your will, allowing you to win when everything is set against you. It is a part of your character and is something you can learn (Quist, 2018). Self-discipline has been found to have a relationship with Academic performance. For instance, in the study of Yue, Dovan, Joseph, and Neil (2009), self-discipline was found to influence both learning rate as well as knowledge accumulation over time. They used a Knowledge Tracing (KT) model to make inferences about students' knowledge and learning. Based on a widely used questionnaire, they measured students' level of self-discipline. When they analyzed the relation of students' self-discipline with their knowledge attributes, they found that high self-discipline students had significantly higher initial knowledge, but there is no consistent relationship of learning while using the tutor. Moreover, higher self-discipline students seemed more careful with respect to making careless mistakes.

Time management, on the other hand, refers to the right use of time including doing the right things at the right time. Shazia and Muhammad (2015) carried out a study to determine the relationship between the time management skills and academic achievement of the students. They maintained that time management is very important and it may actually affect an individual's overall performance and achievements. However, all of these are related by how individuals manage their time to suit their daily living or to make it flow steadily with their routines. Conducive settings and environment will surely promote positive outcomes to the students, besides having good lectures given by their teachers. Nevertheless, students' time management can be considered as one of the aspects that can move a student to be a good student. Good time management is vital for students to shine. However, some of the students do not have a good time management skill that has negatively affect their lives and their academics. The usage of time by students in higher education institutions is related to their daily routines and activities. Students' time management can also affect the stress level of students as they need to cope with their tasks and their personal achievements.

In the same vein, record keeping attitude is described as a conscious effort made by individuals to keep track and well-documented information of all relevant happenings, income, spending, and events for future purpose and accountability. In an exploratory study conducted by Shaw, Pedersen, Cooley, and Callingham (2013), the aim was to examine fourth-year pre-service teachers' behavior in record-keeping whilst on their final professional experience placement. Their findings revealed that most pre-service teachers exhibited positive attitudes toward the

behavior of recording, using, and analyzing classroom data. Despite this positive attitude, many pre-service teachers were unable to maintain any system of record-keeping whilst on placement. For many, this was due to a number of external influences or perceived external influences, which acted as a constraint to their behavior.

It can be inferred that limited researches have been conducted which tries to explain the effect of practicum on other dependent variables. The few studies available were not conducted in Nigeria either. Some were observed to have used only a small sample size such as 34 students which limits the ability to generalize the findings to a very large population. None of these studies have specifically been conducted in the area of practicum and its influence of self-discipline, time management, and record keeping attitudes of pre-service educational administrators. This implies that there is a gap in the literature. Therefore, there is a need for a study of this magnitude to be conducted in Nigeria, using a larger sample size, and one which will try to examine the difference that exists in the variables selected. It is an attempt to address this gap in that gave rise to this study.

## **Methods**

The research design adopted for this study was a quasi-experimental research design. This design was selected because the study intends to find the difference between two groups of students – those with practicum experience (Experimental group) and those without practicum experience (control group). The population of this study comprised all the final year students (3/3; 4/4 and 5/5) and year three students or its equivalent (2/3; 3/4 and 4/5) of the department of educational administration and planning from the University of Calabar. The population comprised 220 final year students (66 students in 3/3; 65 students in 4/4, and 89 students from 5/5) and 208 year three students or its equivalent (42 students in 2/3; 56 students in 3/4 and 110 in 4/5) from both NUC and CES programmes respectively. Cluster sampling technique was used to group the population into six groups/classes as follows – 2/3; 3/3; 3/4; 4/4; 4/5; 5/5. From each grouping (cluster), a simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 20 respondents.

A total of 120 students (60 final year and 60 year three or its equivalent) were eventually selected out of a population of 428 students. The final year students selected were those who embarked on practicum field work and they served as the experimental group for this study, while the year three students or its equivalent, serve as the control group. The instrument used for data collection was Practicum Exercise, Study Habits, and Record-Keeping Abilities Questionnaire (PESDTMARKAQ). It was a 15 – item questionnaire organized on a 4-point Likert scale to obtain data on the three variables from both groups. The questionnaire was structured into two sections – A and B. Section A, elicited respondents' demographic data. Section B was designed with 15 items arranged into four sections to match with the four variables (practicum exercise, self-discipline, time management, and record keeping attitudes) of this study, and to obtain data with respect to practicum exercise. 5 items were designed to obtain information in relation to each section (variable).

The instrument was pilot tested using 20 final year students (10 final year students and 10 year three students) who were not part of the study sample. The questionnaire was administered to the 120 sampled students on different days based on the agreed schedule with the selected participants from each cluster. The completed questionnaires were retrieved from the

respondents for analysis. Independent t-test was used in testing the three null hypotheses at .05 level of significance with the help of Microsoft Excel 2013. Since this was a two-tailed test, the decision rule was that a null hypothesis is rejected once the calculated t-value is greater than the critical table values.

## Results

The results of the hypotheses are presented below

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in self-discipline attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience. The summary of the results from the analysis of data is presented in Table 1

**TABLE 1:** Independent t-test results showing self-discipline attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with and without practicum experience.

Variable (Self-discipline)	N	Mean	S <sup>2</sup>	t-cal.
Students with practicum Experience	60	11.1	4.86	
Students without practicum experience	60	11.5	3.61	1.20
$\alpha = .05;$	$df = 118;$	$t-tab = 1.98$		

The results from table 1 indicate that the calculated t-value 1.20 is less than the critical values 1.98 at .05 level of significance and 118 degrees of freedom. Therefore, we retained the null hypothesis which states that: there is no significant difference in self-discipline attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in time management attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience. The result from the analysis of data is presented two.

**TABLE 2:** Independent t-test showing time management attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with and without practicum experience.

Variable (Time management)	N	Mean	S <sup>2</sup>	t-cal
Students with practicum Experience	60	9.9	4.13	
Students without practicum experience	60	11.4	5.14	4.03
$\alpha = .05;$	$df = 118;$	$t-tab = 1.98$		

From table 2, the results indicate that the calculate t-value 4.03 is greater than the critical values 1.98 at .05 level of significance and 118 degrees of freedom. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience differ significantly in their time management attitudes from those without practicum experience.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference in record keeping attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience. The result from the analysis of data is presented 3.

**TABLE 3:** Independent t-test showing record keeping attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with and without practicum experience.

Variable (Recordkeeping attitudes)	N	Mean	S <sup>2</sup>	t <sub>cal</sub>
Students with practicum Experience	60	11.45	4.76	0.90
Students without practicum experience	60	11.82	5.14	

$$\alpha = .05; \quad df = 118; \quad t\text{-tab} = 1.98$$

The results from table 3 indicate that the calculated t-value 0.90 is less than the critical values 1.98 at .05 level of significance and 118 degrees of freedom. We, therefore, retain the null hypothesis and conclude that; there is no significant difference in the record keeping attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience.

## **Discussion of findings**

The results of this study established that; there is no significant difference in self-discipline attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience. This implies that the practicum exercise had no significant effect on the way pre-service educational administrators who were exposed to the exercise, discipline themselves. This result is quite intriguing as one expects those with practicum experience to demonstrate favorable attitudes towards discipline. This finding may have been inverse because of psychological, socio-economic issues, lifestyles and the upbringing of many pre-service administrators; or perhaps the exercise did not exert appropriate levels of discipline on those who embarked on it. This does not imply that all students with practicum experience are not disciplined, perhaps a majority of them are, or their disciplinary attitudes is close those manifested by those without such experience. This agrees with the findings of Yue, Dovan, Joseph, and Neil (2009) which revealed that self-discipline influence both learning rate as well as knowledge accumulation over time. They found that high self-discipline students had significantly higher knowledge, seemed more careful with respect to making careless mistakes. With this evidence presented, one can conclude that if pre-administrators discipline themselves, they will develop significantly their educational and administrative skills.

This study also showed that pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience differ significantly in their time management attitudes from those without practicum experience. Pre-service administrators who took part in practicum exercise displayed better time management attitudes than their counterparts without the exercise. This finding may be attributed to the exposure pre-service administrators received during their field exercise. This finding corroborates the finding of Shazia and Muhammad (2015) who carried out a study to determine the relationship between the time management skills and academic achievement of the students, and maintained that time management is very important and affects students' overall performance and achievements, one can conclude with some level of confidence that pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience should well academically than those without the experience.

The third finding from this study indicated that there is no significant difference in the record keeping attitudes of pre-service educational administrators with practicum experience and those without practicum experience. This result may also imply that; practicum exercise did not do enough to affect the record keeping attitudes of pre-service educational administrators, or maybe the students who embarked on it were not serious about keeping records. This finding also may be due to the quality of response provided by respondents to the instrument. However, Shaw, Pedersen, Cooley, and Callingham (2013), revealed that most pre-service teachers exhibited positive attitudes toward the behavior of recording, using, and analyzing classroom data. Despite this positive attitude, they revealed that many pre-service teachers were unable to maintain any system of record-keeping whilst on placement. For many, this was due to a number of external influences or perceived external influences, which acted as a constraint to their behavior. These factors may also be held accountable for this result.

## Conclusion

Through the findings of this study, it was concluded that practicum exercise affected the time management attitudes of pre-service educational administrators. The exercise did not have any effect on self-discipline and record keeping attitudes of pre-service educational administrators. Thus, the exercise as an influence that is insignificant on those who embarked on it. This does not imply that the exercise is meaningless, or should be discontinued in the future. The findings from this study only showed that; those who embarked on the exercise did not demonstrate any significant level of learning that is different from those who did not attend. The reason may have been due to the quality of students that attended or the quality of those who did not attend, their responses to the instrument or the duration of the exercise may have been too short, or some other reasons.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

- i. Pre-service administrators with practicum experience should make efforts to develop the level of their self-discipline by enacting and obeying personal policies that are favorable to their academic growth and progress.
- ii. Pre-service administrators with practicum experience should exhibit a deliberate lifestyle that will enable them to serve as examples to others by obeying all prescribed rules and regulations of the school.
- iii. The record keeping attitudes of pre-service administrators with practicum experience should be improved so as to enable them to function effectively on-the-job.
- iv. The duration of practicum exercise be extended above six weeks to 12 weeks so as to offer pre-service educational administrators, the opportunity to develop more skills while on the field. Proper and strict supervision should be provided during practicum exercise so as to trigger seriousness on the part of practicing educational administrators.

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