

# Assessing Pre-Service Teachers Teaching Anxiety

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**Abstract** This paper focuses on teaching anxiety experienced by pre-service teachers during the period of teaching practices among student teachers in Nigeria. A 23 items questionnaire with a reliability index of  $r = 0.87$  was administered to 140 students when they were in 300 and 400 levels. Chi-square test was used to find relationship between student teachers' teaching anxiety. Result shows that there were significant relationships between 12 of the items. Anxiety was found to be particularly associated with classroom control problems, with being evaluated by supervisors, with forming relationships with students and the subject teachers, and with achieving lesson goals. There was no significant difference between male and female pre-service teachers teaching anxiety. The students were more confident at the second teaching practice and the level of anxiety was lower than at their first teaching practice. The paper concluded that efforts should be made by teacher educator lecturers to allay the possible fears pre-service teachers may be harbouring before the commencement of teaching practice exercise.

**Keywords:** *pre-service teachers, teaching anxiety, teaching practice*

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## 1. Introduction

The process of preparing, training and supplementing the pre-service teachers with the basic skills of teaching is considered to be one of the most important tasks in faculties of education. This is done through teaching academic, educational and general cultural courses; in addition to the actual practical training supervised by a group of specialized people, usually one of the faculty professors or subject supervisors [1]. Teaching Practice is an important stage in pre-service teachers' teaching lives, for it gives them a good opportunity to practice all what they have learned from the academic, educational and general cultural courses, and they directly face students and live in the school environment with all its internal and external elements [1]. Weinstein [2] has pointed out that teaching practice is the period in which the real levels of the pre-service teachers' basic skills are determined, which will enable them to be successful teachers in their future. Ponte and Brunheira's [3] has pointed out that teaching practice will lead to a constructive change in the pre-service teachers towards teaching process because the experiences through which they pass, and the activities that they practice will help them form general perspective concerning teachers' job and responsibilities. To sum up, the basic tasks of teaching practice can be summarized into main points. First, it offers a good opportunity to train the pre-service mathematics teachers' basic skills and use them in a right way inside the classroom. Second, accommodation with internal and external circumstances concerning teaching and learning process is one of the important points. Moreover, forming positive attitude towards teaching job and developing it are ones of the

teaching practice aims [4] and it also help the pre-service teachers tame some of their personality problems [5].

The issue of teaching anxiety has been an age long affairs. Gardner and Leak [6] conceptualized teaching anxiety as anxiety experienced in relation to teaching activities that involve the preparation and execution of classroom activities. Anxiety for teaching is a frequent fear of pre-service teachers and can lead to series of task avoidance [7]. It is associated with a particular school subject. It may reflect real or perceived knowledge deficits in subject content as well as in skill of delivery. The studies on subject teaching anxiety will apparently go on unless the students get rid of this anxiety. If it is admitted that anxiety will naturally exist as the human beings exist [8], then it is evident that there are disadvantages of living without anxiety. Akinsola [9] found out that elementary in-service mathematics teachers' mathematics anxiety affects their studying and teaching of mathematics negatively and also have a debilitating effect on their problem solving ability [5]. This may be due to perceive knowledge deficits in mathematics content as well as in mathematics teaching skills, and memories of past occurrences of mathematics failure or mathematics anxiety [10]. This may also be applicable to the teaching of other subjects. Teaching anxiety in mathematics can be defined as teachers' feelings of tension and anxiety which occurs during teaching mathematical concepts, theories and formulas or during problem solving. There may be several reasons of teaching anxiety in mathematics for a pre-service teacher or any other teacher for that matter. Some of these are that: a) Anxiety may arise due to the fact that the teaching point is difficult. b) Pre-service teacher or teacher's teaching competence for the teaching a particular concept may be inadequate. c) Pre-service

teacher or teacher's level of interest towards the teaching profession may be inadequate. d) It may be due to the fact that pre-service teacher or teacher's incompetence to teach in a way which is appropriate to the level of the developmental stage of the learners. Just like pre-service teachers have anxiety for mathematics, such anxiety also existed in the teaching of other school subjects.

Teaching practice is a time when all learned theoretical concepts and ideas in educational psychology, management of classroom, subject content, curriculum development, various philosophies dealing with education and so on are called into use. There are various areas which induce anxiety and cause concern to student teachers. Some of these are in the areas of lesson planning, classroom management, heavy work load, time table of practicing school, evaluation by supervisor/teacher [11]. Writing the lesson formally and then proceeding in the classroom bothers much of student teachers because paper planning fails to match proceedings in the classroom for their first few days and this is enough to make student teachers nervous as they have to be mentally readjusted or re-plan their written lesson plan [11]. Maintaining discipline in the classroom and dealing tactfully with the student who misbehave pose a challenge to student teacher. As noted by Preece [12], discipline problems often led to high level of anxiety in student teachers and that in some cases a high level of anxiety by student teacher at starting of Teaching Practice actually appears to be a cause of discipline problem. The classroom management becomes difficult if student teachers are not able to strike a chord with the student they are teaching.

One other major issue which may cause discomfort to student teacher is 'evaluation anxiety'. Evaluation anxiety refers to anxiety induced by being observed by one's lecturer or subject teacher acting as supervisor. Capel [13] found out that the main cause of anxiety for student teacher was being observed, evaluated or assessed. He noted that student teachers often complain that they forgot the content matter and feel nervous when teacher or supervisor sits at the back of the classroom and observes. Richard Elmore, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, writes that teaching "is a messy, indeterminate, inscrutable, often intimidating, and highly uncertain task. Exposing one's knowledge, personality, and ego to the regular scrutiny of others in public is not easy work under the best of circumstances." and may be more pronounced on novice teachers. Such a feeling may be the foundation of teaching anxiety.

## 1.2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine whether there are changes in pre-service teachers teaching anxiety after the second teaching practice exercise and to investigate the differences in the pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety by gender

## 1.3. Research Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant relationship between pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety before and after the second teaching practice exercise.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female teaching anxiety.

## 2. Method

The study involved 140 pre-service school teachers who have been enrolled in Faculty of Education programme. The whole respondents were given the questionnaire a week before the commencement of their first teaching practice exercise when they were at 300 levels and a year later the same set of student were giving the same questionnaire before embarking on the second and final teaching practice exercise. It is a longitudinal study. The pre-service teachers who are chosen as sample group for this research have not had any formal training in teaching. In other words, student who have gone to the Colleges of Education before coming to the university were excluded from the study. 62% of the students were female, 38% of the students were male. The mean age of participants was 22 years (SD=1.72). In this study, Student Teacher Anxiety Scale (STAS), which was earlier employed by the Capel [13], was used. The aim of using this scale is to determine the pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety levels and scores during their first and second teaching practice exercise. The Student Teacher Anxiety Scale is a five-point Likert-type scale with 26 items with options Very Much (VM); Moderately (M); Somewhat (SW); Rarely (R); and Never (N). Some of the items in the scale are as follows: "I anxious about being observed by my faculty supervisor", "I am anxious about possible problems in the class with individual disruptive children", "I am anxious about how the school subject teacher will react to one or more unsuccessful lessons if they occur", "I am anxious about how to handle defiance from a student". The STAS has high reliability with an internal consistency reliability coefficient of .92 and a retest reliability coefficient of .94. Independent samples t-test was carried out for the analysis of the difference of pre-service teachers' teaching anxieties according gender. Also twelve (12) students were interviewed at the end of the first teaching practice exercise and the same twelve were interviewed again at the end of the second and final teaching practice in an attempt to identify common sources of teacher anxiety in classroom situations and the nature of any anxiety that was experienced.

## 3. Results

The study revealed that pre-service teachers have changes in anxieties and concerns after their first and second teaching practices. Specifically, the pre-service teachers have changes in anxieties when they are being observed by: subject teachers (item 2), faculty supervisors (items 5 and 11), subject supervisor, and school principal (item 15). These results indicate the importance attached by novice teachers to the role of supervisors in whatever form. The fear being nurtured by pre-service teachers at the first teaching practice is probably an indication of a lack of proper rapport between faculty staff and the students on one hand and between school subject supervisors on the other hand. In order to reduce this fear of students concerning faculty staff, it should be made mandatory for students to undergo micro teaching where faculty members should be present to add their voice to students' presentation and thereby familiarize students to the type of criticisms expected during the actual teaching

practice exercise. This may lessen their fright when being supervised by faculty members.

**Table I. showing chi-square analysis of responses when students were in 300 and 400 levels**

S/No	STATEMENTS	Chi-square	df	Signif.
1	I am anxious about how to give each student the attention he/she needs without neglecting others.	2.98	4	.561
2	I am anxious about being observed by my school subject teacher	33.79	4	.000
3	I am anxious about setting work at the right level for the children	12.79	4	.012
4	I am anxious about class control	13.35	4	.010
5	I am anxious about being observed by faculty supervisor	33.93	4	.000
6	I am anxious about how helpful members of staff of the school will be	17.23	4	.002
7	I am anxious about whether or not my plans will be adequate	2.25	4	.691
8	I am anxious about possible problems in the class with individual disruptive student.	2.50	4	.644
9	I am anxious about completing lesson plans in the required forms	2.84	4	.585
10	I am anxious about getting on with the school staff	3.00	4	.558
11	I am anxious about what my supervisor will expect	36.39	4	.000
12	I am anxious about incidents of misbehavior in class	27.01	4	.000
13	I am anxious about how the supervisor will react to one or more unsuccessful lessons if they should occur	43.00	4	.000
14	I am anxious about whether or not I will cover the material adequately	5.35	4	.253
15	I am anxious about whether the principal will be happy with my work	14.47	4	.005
16	I am anxious about controlling the noise level in the class	12.70	4	.013
17	I am anxious about how the school subject teacher will react to one or more unsuccessful lessons if they should occur	27.66	4	.000
18	I am anxious about selecting suitable lesson content	14.86	4	.005
19	I am anxious about maintaining a good enough approach	3.85	4	.427
20	I am anxious about cooperating with school staff	8.58	4	.073
21	I am anxious about how to handle defiance from a student	1.68	4	.794
22	I am anxious about maintaining a good enough standard of preparation	3.06	4	.547
23	I am anxious about assessment by the supervisor	4.23	4	.237
24	I am anxious about getting all paper work done in time	12.23	4	.016
25	I am anxious about what lesson the supervisor would come in to see.	24.64	4	.000
26	I am anxious about whether or not my performance will be satisfactory from the point of view of the school subject teacher.	14.20	4	.007

The result also indicated that significant differences in anxieties level existed when they were having their first teaching practice and when they are having the second teaching practice. The anxiety level was higher when they are having their first teaching than when they are having the second teaching experience. A plausible reason for these observed changes might be that having going through the process once, they already have gained experience and know what is expected of them and as a result have more confidence in facing the teaching practice exercise at the second time. The issue of class control was an initial problem to the novice teachers (items 4, 12, 13, 16 & 17). There was significant difference between their perceived class control between the first and second teaching practice. They were more confidence during the second teaching experience than at their first attempt. They were equally apprehensive about preparing for their lessons (items 18 & 24) at their first attempt than at the second attempt.

When the pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety scores were analyzed, there were no gender-related mean differences [ $t(138) = .21, p = .734 > .05$ ]. Previous studies are available suggesting that there are gender-related differences [14] or in contrast, there are not any gender-related differences [15,16] for mathematics teaching anxiety. In this study, gender was found out to be an ineffective factor for student teaching anxiety. This finding is admitted to be important for pre-service teachers. In this respect, it can be claimed that equal learning opportunities are provided without gender discrimination for every pre-service teacher by the teacher educators at the faculties.

The pre-service teachers believe that their behaviour changes after they have undergone the first teaching practice experience and their confidence level in the classroom increased with more interaction with their

students. The interview responses also show that their main consideration remains to get good remarks and grades from their supervising teachers and their faculty supervisors.

## 4. Conclusion

The significance of identifying sources of students' worries/anxieties during teaching practice lies in the evidence that anxiety affects teacher behaviour and this in turn reduces classroom effectiveness, particularly in relation to effects of lower students' achievement and increase levels of students' anxiety. This study revealed that pre-service teachers do experience different levels of teaching anxieties at different stages of their training. Result of the interview also indicated that pre-service teachers -a novitiates- need confidence to attending his/her teaching during his/her first practice teaching and teaching anxiety could come from varieties of sources. It is important for teacher educators to be abreast with the causes of pre-service teachers' negative beliefs and anxieties about teaching and the types of school subjects that induced teaching anxieties and device intervention programmes that facilitate change in nonthreatening ways to the pre-service teachers' beliefs and conceptions about the nature and discourse of teaching.

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