

The Concept of Best Practice in Vocational and Technical Education: Case Study of Federal College of Education (Tech) Gombe

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Abstract:-The purpose of this study is to appraise what academic staff of Federal College of Education Technical Gombe understands by the concept of 'best practice'. The concept of best practices resonate with almost everybody, it has been a buzz word in many fields of human endeavors. It is the same in the academic world, yet it is a nebulous construct precisely demarcating what constitute best practice seems to be a daunting task. In this study the concept of best practice was tested with 163 academic staffs of Federal College of Education (Tech.) Gombe. Results indicate that concept of best practice is not well understood by the respondents. Suggestion for further studies is made; among others there is a need for scholars to come up with a group of procedures that will be used as best practice.

Keywords: Best Practice, Concept, Education, Procedures, Standard and Guideline.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of best practice is a familiar and acceptable concept in major fields of human action. Best practice is a common term in education and other arenas, such as business, manufacturing and software development. As common a term as best practice is extant literature indicate that it remains elusive to precise definition. According to Hamilton(2011, p.129), "There is no single definition for best practice, the basic elements include practices based on the careful collection of relevant evidence, an action resulting in a positive outcome, and the ability to reproduce results". Again "... literature on best practices research [to be] confusing, terminology incoherent, fragmented, and in many ways inconsistent. There is no consensus on what best practice actually is and how it should be properly conducted"(Vesely, 2011, p. 99).

In another development Cato (2001) questioned if collections of intellectual exercises like symposium can be regarded as best practice in a particular field. Subsequently, will symposium on best practice in vocational technical education be accepted as procedures for best practice in teaching vocational technical education? He further suggests considering terms like standard and guideline. Hatheway(1992)defined guideline as - formalization presented by a technical society or governmental agency as basis for

voluntary adherence as the basis for acceptance of work product; requires additional thought and evaluation by the practitioner to implement on single project work. And defined standard as - a codification of technology or procedure developed, tested, peer-reviewed, and published by a professional society or governmental agency; to be adhered to by members and subscribers; generally must be followed closely in attention to its prescribed detail. While Anonymous (1982) defined standard as - a measure, principle, model, etc., established for use as a rule or basis in comparison in measuring or judging capacity, quantity, content, extent, value, quantity, etc. Contrasting the two terms Cato (2001) observed that

"Guidelines state the basis for an acceptable product or process. The individual faced with implementing the guidelines must evaluate and interpret the intent of the guideline in light of the institutional setting and immediate circumstances. This guideline suggests a certain level of quality or process, but generally this is a minimal level rather than one of exceptional quality. Guidelines are also voluntary; although recommended they are not an absolute requirement. While a standard, by comparison, is more rigidly defined, with less room for interpretation or extrapolation into a situation. The standard exists only following a process of testing and peer review, and in some fields this process can be very formal and extensive. To claim a certain level of quality or achievement for a particular practice, one is required to follow the standard".

The next logical question according to Cato(2001), here is where does the term best practice, fits in comparison to standard and guideline? Rissannen (2000) in Cato (2001)"Best practice" implies to me that some sort of professional judgment has been made - the field has been surveyed and the professionals all agree that this is "best practice". The closest term in my mind is "standard" - it is the goal to which we all aspire. Also Panza (2000) in Cato (2001)... "best practice" clearly implies a group review. I can foresee a group of professionals "deciding" that a group of

procedures is better than others and thereby stamped it as "best." I think it does carry a feeling of an endorsement from at least part of the community. Again Rabeler (2000) in Cato (2001)... "best practice" has been more highly evaluated than "protocol", which may have been more highly evaluated than "guidelines".

From the above arguments do we in the educational field have these peer group review judgements? If we do, are lecturers in Federal College of Education Technical Gombe aware and practicing them? The contributions of this study are twofold. First, to appraise how much is understood about best practice by academic staff in Federal college of Education (Tech) Gombe. Secondly to determine whether best practice is observed by academic staff of Federal College of Education (Tech) Gombe.

II. METHODS

Research Instrument

The research instrument used for the study is a dichotomous questionnaire and it was divided into two parts. Part I captures demographic variables of academic staff of Federal College of Education Technical Gombe. Part II captures questions relating to best practice, see Appendix A.

Population / Sample

There is a total of 288 academic staff in Federal College of Education Technical Gombe, (F.C.E. (T) Gombe pay role, 2018), this constitute the population frame used for the study. Krejcie and Morgan(1970), table is used to arrive at the required sample size of 162. A total of 210 were sampled as not all distributed questionnaires will be returned and be useful. These questionnaires were taken to all six schools within the college (School of Business Education, School of Science, School of Education, School of Vocational Education, School of Technical Education and School of Primary Education). During the first wave, a total of 110 responses were received. After numerous efforts, we received responses from additional 80 respondents. In total we received responses from 190 staff (a response rate of over 90%) with this rate there is no need to check for respondents bias (Armstrong & Overton, 1977).

Reliability

The questionnaire elements were tested for reliability. We computed the Krippendorff's alpha reliability(Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) to estimate the inter coder reliability. The alpha (α)results are reported below. Krippendorff alpha reliability is used because it is suitable for any level of data measurement. This statistical test can be use with or without missing data. An alpha of 1 indicates perfect reliability. An alpha of 0 indicates absence of reliability. An alpha of 1 indicates perfect reliability and that is most often what we want. The results show that the inter coder reliability is low ($\alpha = 0.6500$) i.e. the five observers did not agree. The reason for this could be the lack of "consensus on what best practice

actually is and how it should be properly conducted" (Vesely, 2011, p. 99).

Data Screening

The data collected was screened and unengaged responses were deleted from the data. Unengaged response refers to response with exact single value for all the questions. Standard deviation was computed all those with values less than 0.5 were eliminated(Gaskin, 2012). A total of 15 data was deleted for unengaged responses. Data was also screened for missing data and 12 responses were deleted for missing data. A total of 163 responses were used for data analysis.

Characteristics of Respondents

The respondents are from the six schools in Federal College of Education Technical Gombe. 54% are from School of Business Education, 36 % are from School of Technical Education, 32% are from School of Vocational Education, 28%, 11%, and 2% from school of Science, School of Education and Primary Education respectively. Over 22% of the respondents are having a Doctorate's degree, and 49% are having a Master's degree and 26% are having first degree. Among the respondents 14% are Chief Lectures, 16% are Senior Lecturers. Respondents have been lecturing from 5 to 28 years.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data collected is analyzed with SPSS Version 20. The ideal statistics for representing a dichotomous or nominal data is the frequency distribution. The respondents' responses to each question are presented in the following five Tables below. Based on the SPSS output the following inferences can be made: Table 1 shows that 54.6 % of the academic staff in Federal College of Education Technical Gombe knows what best practice is. In Table 2 below 42.9% claimed they have been observing best practice. 59.5 % believed best practice is peculiar to the teachers alone see Table 3. The result of question four which is presented in Table 4 shows 68.1% agreed that best practice is unique to the classroom environment. In Table 5 below 66.3% claimed that best practice is peculiar to the entire teaching environment. Table 6 shows that 50.3 % of the staff did not observe best practice in teaching.

Table 1 Do you know what best practice is?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	89	54.6	54.6	54.6
Valid No	74	45.4	45.4	100.0
Total	163	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work 2018

Table 2
Have you been practicing best practice?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	70	42.9	42.9	42.9
Valid No	93	57.1	57.1	100.0
Total	163	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work 2018

Table 3
Is best practice peculiar to the teacher alone?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	66	40.5	40.5	40.5
Valid No	97	59.5	59.5	100.0
Total	163	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work 2018

Table 4
Do you agree that best practice is unique to the Classroom environment?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	111	68.1	68.1	68.1
Valid No	52	31.9	31.9	100.0
Total	163	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work 2018

Table 5
Do you agree that best practice is peculiar to the entire teaching environment?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	108	66.3	66.3	66.3
Valid No	55	33.7	33.7	100.0
Total	163	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work 2018

Table 6
Can you say Federal College of Education Tech Gombe is observing best practice?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	81	49.7	49.7	49.7
Valid No	82	50.3	50.3	100.0
Total	163	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work 2018

IV. DISCUSSION

In this research we tested questions to establish if academic staffs in Federal College of Education Technical Gombe are aware of what constitute the concept of best practice in teaching vocational subjects, and if best practice is observed in teaching. Panza (2000) "best practice" clearly implies a

group review. I can foresee a group of professionals "deciding" that a group of procedures is better than others and thereby stamped it as "best." I think it does carry a feeling of an endorsement from at least part of the community. In line with the above definition the findings of this study suggest that academic staffs of Federal College of Education (Tech.) Gombe are not aware of what best practice is in teaching vocational subjects. 54.6 % of the respondents claimed they knew what best practice is. Follow up question to this question request respondents to state three elements of best practice; only 27.6 % of the respondents attempt that question. Respondent number 12 states: classroom management, implementing curriculum, and using variety of teaching methods. Respondent number 4 states: punctuality, fairness. Respondent number 3 states: production of self-directed learners.

59.5 % believed best practice is peculiar to the teachers alone, if this claim by the respondents is true (which is what it is) then how comes only 27.6 % responded to stating elements of best practice? 66.3% claimed that best practice is peculiar to the entire teaching environment; based on the definition of best practice above it can be claimed that best practice being a process or procedure is peculiar to the individual. 50.3 % of the staff did not observe best practice in teaching. These findings in particular supported the argument advanced by (Vesely, 2011) that best practice is 'confusing, terminology incoherent, fragmented, and in many ways inconsistent.'

V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand if academic Staffs of Federal College of Education Technical Gombe are familiar with the concept of Best Practice in teaching Technical and Vocational subjects and if they are observing this concept in teaching. Results obtained indicate that the concept is not understood and subsequently observing best practice is not adhered to; while this study highlight interesting findings and implications. The limitations of this study should be noted to enhance the quality of future research.

Limitations of the study

This study has the following limitations: our study looked at the staff of one academic institution Federal College of Education Technical Gombe. In order to generalize it will be interesting to include other Colleges of Education.

Suggestions

- 1 Best practice cannot be a uniform application each institution should study its environment and come up with its model.
- 2 There is the need for a follow up study that may itemize other features of what constitute best practice.
- 3 There is a need for scholars to come up with a group of procedures that will be use as best practice.

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Appendix A

Sample Questionnaire

The Concept of Best Practice in Vocational Technical Education

The questions below constitute a survey of Academic Staff of Federal College of Education Technical Gombe, on how they fathom the concept of “best practice” in Vocational Technical Education. We would greatly appreciate receiving your answers to these questions. The data we collect will make important contributions in two ways:

- (1) It will help us gain more insight on the understanding of the concept of best practice by the Academic Staff of the College.
- (2) Based on the outcome it will help us proper directions to enhance better understanding of the concept and ultimate adherence to best practice in Vocational Technical Education.

Your responses will be strictly confidential and will be combined with data from many other staff. No individual will be identified.

This survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

We will be happy to provide you with a summary of our major results. If you would like to receive one, please check below:

I..... would like to receive a summary of the major results. Thank you!

Federal College of Education (Tech) Gombe

Dr. Ado Makama Adamu

Mrs. Rakiya Audu

Dr. Rhoda Sarki Awak

Yakubu Abubakar

Please click one box in each row to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that item

- 1. How long have you been teaching in Federal College of Education Technical Gombe? _____
- 2. What is your present position? _____
- 3. What is your highest level of education? _____
- 4. Can you state your school and department? _____
- 5. Do you know what constitute ‘best practice’ in teaching Vocational and Technical Education? Yes _____ No _____
- 6. If the answer to five above is yes state three elements of best practice.
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____
- 7. Have you been practicing best practice in your teaching? Yes _____ No _____
- 8. If the answer to seven above is yes state those aspects of best practice that you observe in your teaching.
- 9. Is best practice peculiar to the teacher alone? Yes _____ No _____
- 10. Do you agree that best practice is unique to the teaching environment (Class Room)? Yes _____ No _____
- 11. Do you agree that best practice is peculiar to the entire teaching environment? Yes _____ No _____
- 12. Can you say Federal College of Education Technical Gombe as an academic institution observed best practice? Yes _____ No _____

END OF SURVEY - Thank you for your time and cooperation