

ASSESSMENT OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' CLASSROOM TEACHING READINESS IN ILORIN, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

¹Mayowa Olurotimi Ogunjimi, ¹Muideen Ayomide Atoba and ²Akeem Opeyemi Raheem
¹University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria, ²Kwara State University, Malete-Ilorin, Nigeria.

Abstract

In the realm of education, the efficacy of classroom teaching is inexorably linked to the preparedness and readiness of pre-service teachers. Hence, this study assesses the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, the study involved 309 final-year education students from three universities in Ilorin. A self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect data. The instrument was validated by experts in Teachers' Education programme and the Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate yielded an index of 0.84. The data was analyzed using frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the research hypotheses were tested with t-test and Analysis of Variance. It was revealed that pre-service teachers had a high level of pedagogical content knowledge (51.1%), high level of classroom management skills (75.1%), and high knowledge level of instructional strategies (75.4%). Also, it was revealed that classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers do not depend on gender and institutional type ($p > 0.05$). Recommendations include the emphasis on sustaining the high level of classroom teaching readiness through active learning strategies in teachers' education programmes, structured mentorship programmes, and reflective practices to further enhance teaching readiness.

Keywords: *Pre-Service Teachers, Teaching Readiness, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Classroom Management, Instructional Strategies.*

Corresponding author
Mayowa Olurotimi Ogunjimi
Department of Adult and Primary Education,
Faculty of Education,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.
ogunjimi.mo@unilorin.edu.ng

Introduction

The effectiveness of teaching relies heavily on the preparedness of pre-service teachers. The role of pre-service teachers is crucial in shaping young minds and fostering intellectual growth. Understanding the readiness of pre-service teachers involves a multifaceted approach, including pedagogical knowledge, practical skills, and socio-emotional competencies (Cuhadar, 2018; Lekhu, 2023). This includes theoretical foundations, instructional strategies, and classroom management techniques. Additionally, readiness involves cultivating adaptive capacities, empathy, and cultural competence for inclusive learning environments. Uncovering these layers of readiness is a complex process involving cognitive, affective, and behavioural attributes.

Teachers provide indispensable services to society when compared to services provided by any other profession. Without efficient teachers in the educational system, quality learning outcomes cannot be achieved. Since teachers initiate learning, they need to be adequately prepared for teaching. This is why the Federal Republic of Nigeria in its National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) asserts that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Hence, the country takes teacher education very seriously. For any country to advance in various spheres, its educational system and teacher education must be properly considered because education brings about development in the various sectors of the country. Of course, this has resulted in countries worldwide taking education as the priority in their planning, and Nancy et al. (2015) has maintained that the progressive countries in the world give teaching the highest status.

Learning to teach is a complex exercise because teachers are the responsible agents in education and in schools, performing multifaceted tasks (Buang & Bahari, 2011). Therefore, pre-service teachers must be involved in different roles and responsibilities during their teaching practice by learning how to perform the different tasks of a teacher. Their different roles and responsibilities include the following: being ready to deal with the diversity of learners, curriculum policy, and administration in the school and classroom environment (Hudson & Hudson, 2017). Thus, Tomlinson (2015) regarded teaching as a complex but 'open' skill, in which teachers are required to apply their skills to new situations. It is because of these above assertions that different researchers give different descriptions of the situation that pre-service teachers come across during their practice teaching and even during their first years of teaching.

Readiness, from different points of view, may have different connotations. Maxwell and Clifford (2014) explained readiness from a psychological point of view, as the state in which the cognitive domain of an individual is alert and able to comprehend and harness all that is taught. They further explained psychological readiness as the intellectual and academic abilities needed to succeed in school. Thus, Housego (2019) declared that pre-service teachers' feelings of preparedness may influence their ability to perform teaching tasks. Socially, readiness means the ability of the individual to interact with the people and relate with the general beliefs or predominant culture of the environment in which they find themselves (Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, 2010). Based on the aforesaid reasons, Akuegwu, et al (2011) asserted that the degree of readiness is a function of the degree of preparation and the quality of teaching skills acquired by an individual over a given period of time on the one hand, and the degree of training and

skills imparted on the individual by an institution on the other. Hence, readiness in this study will be perceived as being psychologically, socially and emotionally alert towards the accomplishment and achievement of set goals or given tasks.

More so, the readiness and quality of teachers in the education system is the most desired aspect of education worldwide. Hence, Smith (2013) averred that pre-service teachers' readiness for the teaching profession is an essential factor. Smith's assertion shows that the role of practice teaching to the pre-service teachers' training cannot be compromised because it is where they interact with the seasoned and experienced teachers, learners and the school environment. This informs Naylor, Campbell-Evans and Maloney's (2015) declaration, in a survey which was conducted both nationally and internationally, that initial teacher education preparations do prepare adequate graduates for real teaching. This is why researchers such as Akuegwu et al. (2011), Dewey (2014) and Housego (2019) continue to advocate for the need to assess the classroom readiness of pre-service teachers. Assessing classroom readiness is a crucial aspect of ensuring that pre-service teachers are prepared to engage effectively in the teaching and learning process. Classroom readiness encompasses various factors which include pedagogical content knowledge, classroom management skills, knowledge of instructional strategies, and the emotional and social preparedness of the teachers.

The role of a teacher in acquiring pedagogical content knowledge is very crucial. Thus, it becomes crucial for the pre-service teachers to be well equipped with all the necessary "ammunitions" in order to be able to assist learners in their learning. Pedagogical content knowledge is among the main "ammunitions" which pre-service teachers should master before going to class. According to Chard (2013), both pedagogy and content knowledge are intertwined and are important in designing instruction that conveys content most effectively to equip learners with adequate information. It is not enough knowing what to teach without knowing how to teach (Tirri & Ubani, 2012). Pre-service teachers who want to pursue a teaching career have to know that teaching is a permanent learning process, a series of formal and informal learning experiences which have to be acquired throughout their lifetime. That is the reason why those who are interested in pursuing this career of teaching have to be well prepared and ready for its responsibilities and challenges (Shulman, 2012).

It is evident that proper application of appropriate pedagogical skills will depend on the deep understanding of the subject matter. Consequently, this will provide foundation for content knowledge in order to make ideas accessible to learners. Both pedagogical skills and content knowledge are important to pre-service teachers and practice teaching programme. However, Huang and Lin, (2014) indicated that in addition to pedagogical and content knowledge skills, classroom management skills play a vital role for learners to concentrate in what is taught in class. Thus, the need arises to explore the importance of classroom management skills in pre-service teachers' training.

According to Polat, et al (2013), classroom management means modelling the expected behaviour for learners and eliminating the unwanted behaviours. Classroom management can be referred to as discipline and behaviours of learners in classrooms. Behaviour management is one of the main challenges which the majority of pre- service teachers encounter when they are in schools for practice teaching programme (Beare, et al, 2012). According to Hildenbrand and Arndt (2016), the key behaviours involve: teachers setting

clear rules and expectations for the class with the involvement of learners so that they can observe those rules; informing learners about the consequences of breaking the rules; involving the learners when setting the teaching goals; and establishing good relationship with the learners.

On the other hand, Freiberg (2016) identifies models and approaches of classroom management that are foundations into which teachers build a management plan. He described three models of classroom management. Firstly, assertive discipline, which is a structured, systematic approach designed to assist teachers in running an organized, teacher-in-charge classroom environment, logical consequences, and teacher effectiveness training. Secondly, logical consequences which are disciplinary actions that are intended to teach students to make better behaviour choices rather than to punish them. Thirdly, teacher effectiveness training implied that it is important for teachers to teach their learners to regulate and manage their own behaviour. By so doing, teachers will be empowering their learners to conceptualize and solve problems for themselves.

Instructional strategies encompass any type of learning technique a teacher uses to help students learn or gain a better understanding of the course material. They allow teachers to make the learning experience more fun and practical and can also encourage students to take more of an active role in their education. According to Chike-Okoli et al. (2020), a well-structured instructional strategy with adequate learning materials significantly enhances students' engagement and academic performance. Instructional strategies that are structurally planned and utilized, plays a vital role in fostering effective learning outcomes. In addition, the presence of visual aids, technology, and other educational tools enhances an interactive and stimulating learning environment, which is essential for maximizing students' potential.

Moreover, teachers' use of effective instructional strategies that align with students' learning needs and preferences are fundamental to promoting academic success. Olayiwola and Adebayo (2019) indicated that differentiated instruction, which tailors teaching methods to accommodate diverse learners, is crucial for addressing varying levels of readiness among students. Teachers' professional development and pre-service training are essential to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge required to implement instructional strategies effectively. By continuously assessing and adapting their instructional practices, teachers can ensure that all students are provided with equitable opportunities to succeed, thereby improving overall classroom readiness.

Examining pre-service teachers' classroom teaching readiness is essential for understanding the quality of teacher education programs. Readiness for teaching is multi-faceted, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and practical competencies. These competencies are influenced by various factors such as pre-service teachers' experiences, teacher education curricula, mentoring quality, and practical teaching opportunities. Hence, this study was guided by Shulman's theories of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and Bandura's self-efficacy beliefs. The social learning theory forms the basis of the concept of personal self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). According to the theory, environmental, behavioral, and cognitive forces are in constant interaction to shape human behavior. According to Hasse (2019), human learning is socio-culturally based collective epistemology from the moment of birth, and that learning also builds on prior learning. This means that teachers' teaching readiness is reflected in the social interaction

of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, instructional strategies, classroom management skills, subject-matter expertise, positive and negative attitudes with the classroom environment. According to him, learning is a socially mediated process, and individuals develop their understanding through interactions within a cultural context. For pre-service teachers, this theory suggests that readiness to teach effectively is nurtured within collaborative environments where they can engage with mentors, peers, and the classroom community.

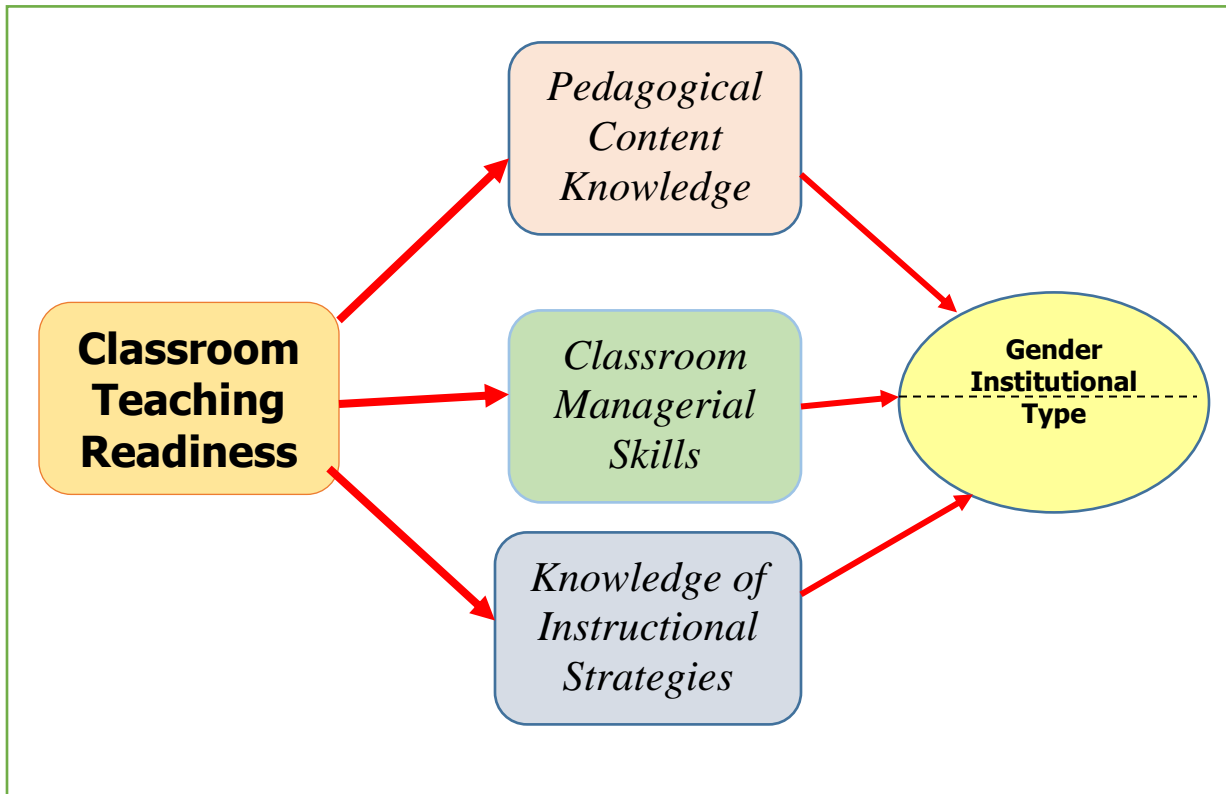


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on classroom teaching readiness

Figure 1 illustrates that the quality of teachers' education programme is reflected in teachers' classroom teaching readiness. The aspects of pre-service teachers' classroom teaching readiness that is explored in this study are pedagogical content knowledge, classroom management skills and knowledge of instructional strategies which can depend on gender and institutional type.

Assessing classroom teaching readiness of teachers is a multifaceted process which includes consideration of the pedagogical content knowledge, classroom management skills, and knowledge of instructional strategies. As pointed out by Eke and Ugwu (2017), a holistic approach to assessing and improving classroom teaching readiness is vital for promoting equitable educational outcomes and ensuring that students have the opportunity to succeed. Therefore, pre-service teachers need to prepare themselves as capable and committed educators. They need to engage in professional development

activities that will help them to develop a sense of purpose and readiness to committed effective classroom teaching.

Statement of the problem

In the realm of education, the efficacy of classroom teaching is inexorably linked to the preparedness and readiness of pre-service teachers. As these aspiring educators embark on their journey into the dynamic landscape of teaching, an array of challenges, complexities, and opportunities converge to shape their trajectory. Understanding the nuances of classroom teaching readiness among pre-service teachers emerges as a pressing concern which is characterized by interrelated factors that influence pedagogical effectiveness, classroom management, instructional strategies and educational outcomes. Preservice teachers' classroom teaching readiness in Nigeria has been grappling with numerous problems such as low mode of entry, inadequate facilities and equipment, limited subject specialization, unbalanced evaluation devices, haphazard conduct of teaching practice exercise. Moreover, the quality of teacher education programme in the country has been criticized due to factors such as infrastructure availability, pedagogical strategy used, classroom management practices, other students' and teachers' factors (ASr & Ogunode, 2020). Research studies have been carried out on classroom teaching quality and improved academic outcomes for learners (Olawale, 2000; Ogunsola, 2003; Ogunjimi & Lawal, 2019). These research studies focused on teachers' qualifications, classroom quality, social engagement/behavior and learning outcomes. The preparation of teachers and their readiness to teach in Ilorin, Kwara State has been a major concern. Hence, the gap for pre-service teachers' classroom teaching readiness exists which this study tries to fill. Therefore, the major purpose of the study was to assess classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, taking into account the practical preparation of teachers for classroom teaching.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria. The study therefore seeks to:

- i. assess the level of pedagogical content knowledge of pre-service teachers in Ilorin.
- ii. examine the level of classroom management skills of pre-service teachers in Ilorin.
- iii. investigate the knowledge level of pre-service teachers on instructional strategies.
- iv. ascertain whether there is significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria based on gender.
- v. determine whether there is significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria based on institutional type.

Research questions

The following questions are raised to guide the study.

- i. What is the level of pedagogical content knowledge of pre-service teachers in Ilorin?

- ii. What is the level of classroom management skills of pre-service teachers in Ilorin?
- iii. What is the knowledge level of pre-service teachers on instructional strategies in Ilorin?

Research hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria based on gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria based on institutional type.

Methodology

This study uses the descriptive survey research design to assess the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The research covered all the universities offering education courses in Ilorin, Nigeria. The population of the study comprises all students offering teacher education programmes in all tertiary institutions in Ilorin, Nigeria while the target population consist of all final-year education students offering Bachelor of Education degree programmes in the tertiary institution. Final-year students were chosen as the target population because they have spent over three years in the teacher education programme and were at the final stage of completing the programme, hence have acquired the training that is supposed to justify their classroom teaching readiness.

Multi-stage sampling was used to select respondents. At first stage, simple random sampling technique by ballot was used to select three universities (comprising of one Federal, one State and one Private owned university) and, at the second stage, simple random sampling technique by ballot was used in selecting 103 pre-service teachers across each selected university. A total of 309 pre-service teachers were selected for the study. The instrument for data collection is a self-constructed questionnaire titled: "Questionnaire on Classroom Teaching Readiness of Pre-Service Teachers (QCTRPT)" was administered to elicit information from the respondents. The first section of the questionnaire contained demographic information of the respondents while the other sections consisted of twenty-one items that were classified into four segments: section B contained items on the pedagogical content knowledge of the pre-service teachers, section C consisted of items on classroom management skills, and section D consisted of items on pre-service teachers' knowledge of instructional strategies.

The questionnaire adopted a 4-Point Likert scale, while the response formats used depended on the items on each section. The content validity of the instrument was done by two experts in the teacher education programme and educational test and measurement. Also, the Cronbach Alpha reliability of the instrument yielded an index of 0.84 which was adjudged to be highly reliable. The content validity of the instrument was done by two experts in teachers' education programme and educational test and measurement while the Cronbach Alpha reliability of the instrument yielded an index of 0.84 which was judged to be highly reliable. The data collected was analysed using

frequency count, percentage, mean and standard to provide answer to the research questions while the two research hypotheses were tested with the use of t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) respectively.

Results

Research question 1: What is the level of pedagogical content knowledge of pre-service teachers in Ilorin?

To answer this research question, the data collected from the respondents on the items relating to level of pedagogical content knowledge among pre-service teachers in Ilorin were analysed using descriptive statistics. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of descriptive statistics of level of pedagogical content knowledge of pre-service teacher in Ilorin

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Understanding how to present complex concepts in ways that are accessible and engaging for students to promote deeper understanding and retention of content.	3.00	0.81	High
2.	Knowledge of diverse instructional strategies to tailor approaches to meet varied needs, interests, and learning styles of students.	2.89	0.85	High
3.	Proficiency in assessing student learning to design and implement effective formative and summative assessments.	2.98	0.91	High
4.	Skillful integration of content and pedagogy to foster the development of higher-order thinking skills.	2.99	0.81	High
5.	Ability to translate theoretical knowledge into effective instructional practices.	2.88	0.90	High
6.	Overwhelmed by knowledge of subject matter expected to be taught thereby developing pedagogical strategies specific to each content area.	2.81	0.87	High
7.	Navigate cultural and linguistic differences among students in order to identify pedagogical strategies	2.87	0.84	High

Key: *Low = Mean < 2.50*

High = Mean > 2.50

The result in table 1 shows that most of the respondents displayed high level on all the items relating to pedagogical content knowledge since the mean response for each of the items is greater than 2.50 which reveals that respondents' level of pedagogical content knowledge among pre-service teachers in Ilorin is high. Furtherance to this, the total responses of the respondents which were in continuous data were summed up and converted to categorical data, thereby having total minimum points of 7 and maximum points of 28. Hence, the range is 21 points. This was categorized into three levels. The points between 7 to 13 is Low, 14 to 20 is Moderate, and 21 to 28 is High. Therefore, the summary of result on the level of pedagogical content knowledge among pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria is presented in the table below.

Table 2: Summary of the level of pedagogical content knowledge of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria

Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Low	10	3.2	3.2
Moderate	141	45.6	45.6
High	158	51.1	51.1
Total	309	100.0	100.0

Table 2 revealed that most of the pre-service teachers, 158 (51.1%) had a high level of pedagogical knowledge, 141 (45.6%) of the respondents showed a moderate level of pedagogical content knowledge, while 10 (3.2%) of the respondents had a low level of pedagogical content knowledge. This revealed that the majority 158 (51.1%) of the pre-service teachers had a high level of pedagogical content knowledge in Ilorin.

Research question 2: What is the level of classroom management skills of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria?

To answer this research question, the data collected from the respondents on the items related to the level of classroom management skills of pre-service teachers were analysed using descriptive statistics. The result of the analysis is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Summary of descriptive statistics of level of classroom management skills of pre-service teachers

S/N Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1. Manage disruption and allowing for more instructional time and better student focus.	3.14	0.82	High
2. My classroom management skills boost confidence and reduce stress.	3.15	0.83	High
3. My self-discipline, respect for students, and positive social behaviours will enhance my classroom management	3.32	0.84	High
4. My classroom management is a critical skill which directly influences the learning environment and student outcomes.	3.16	0.85	High
5. Prior classroom experience makes me anticipate and effectively respond to diverse student behaviors and classroom dynamic.	3.22	0.79	High
6. My training emphasises practical application, theoretical knowledge leaving me to prepare for real-world classroom scenarios.	3.16	0.86	High
7. Access to constructive feedback and mentorship foster the development of effective classroom management strategies.	3.13	0.79	High

Key: *Low = Mean < 2.50*

High = Mean > 2.50

The result on table 3 shows that most of the respondents indicated high level on each of the items of classroom management skills since the mean response for each item is greater than 2.50 which reveals high level of classroom management skills. To expatiate

further, the total responses for each respondent on the items relating to classroom management skills were summed up in order to determine the extent of classroom management skills. The total minimum points 7 while the total maximum point is 28 and the range is 21 points. This was categorized into three levels which are Low, Moderate, and High extent. Having an interval of 7 points, the total points of 7 to 13 is Low, 14 to 20 is moderate, and 21 to 28 is high extent respectively. Therefore, the summary of results on the extent of classroom management skills of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Summary of the extent of classroom management skills of pre-service teachers

Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Low	4	1.3	1.3
Moderate	73	23.6	23.6
High	232	75.1	75.1
Total	309	100.0	100.0

Table 4 revealed that 232 of the pre-service teachers (75.1%) had high levels of classroom management skills, while 73 (23.6%) of the pre-service teachers showed a moderate extent of classroom management skills, and 4 (1.3%) of the pre-service teachers had low extent of classroom management skills. This revealed that the majority (75.1%) of pre-service teachers had a high extent of classroom management skills.

Research question 3: What is the knowledge level of pre-service teachers on instructional strategies in Ilorin, Nigeria?

To answer this research question, the data collected from the respondents on the items related to the knowledge of the pre-service teachers on instructional strategies in Ilorin were analysed using descriptive statistics. The result of the analysis is presented in table 5.

Table 5: Summary of descriptive statistics on the knowledge level of pre-service teachers on instructional strategies

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	I have acquired adequate knowledge of instructional strategies.	3.36	0.79	High
2.	General understanding of pedagogical principles, including the importance of differentiation and scaffolding is acquired by me	3.17	0.89	High
3.	I have learnt about instructional theories and models in coursework, providing a theoretical framework for understanding instructional strategies.	3.06	0.89	High
4.	My prior education experience influenced my knowledge of instructional strategies.	3.18	0.76	High
5.	The quality and rigor of the teacher preparation program significantly impact my knowledge levels.	3.18	0.82	High
6.	Hands-on teaching experiences during practicum placements expose me to diverse instructional contexts and strategies.	3.28	0.79	High
7.	Guidance and feedback from experienced mentor teachers play a crucial role in shaping my understanding and application of instructional strategies.	3.30	0.83	High

Key: *Low = Mean < 2.50*

High = Mean > 2.50

The results on table 5 show that all the items on pre-service teachers' level of knowledge on instructional strategies are high since the mean response for each of the item is greater than 2.50. In addition, the total responses of each respondent, which was in continuous data, were summed up resulting in total minimum points of 7, maximum points of 28 and the range is 21 points. This was categorized into three levels, which are Low, Moderate, and High with the interval of 7 points. Hence, the low level is 7 to 13, moderate level is 14 to 20, and high level is 21 to 28 respectively. Therefore, the summary of results on the knowledge level of pre-service teachers on instructional strategies in Ilorin, Nigeria is presented in table 6.

Table 6: Summary of the knowledge level of pre-service teachers on instructional strategies in the Ilorin, Nigeria

Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Low	5	1.6	1.6
Moderate	71	23.0	23.0
High	233	75.4	75.4
Total	309	100.0	100.0

Table 6 revealed that 233 of the pre-service teachers (75.4%) had a high knowledge level of instructional strategies, 71 of the respondents (23.0%) showed a moderate knowledge level of instructional strategies, while 5 of the respondents (1.6%) had a low knowledge

level of instructional strategies. This revealed that the majority (75.4%) of the pre-service teachers had high knowledge level of instructional strategies.

Research hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria based on gender.

To test this research hypothesis, the response to all the items were summed together and the data collected were subjected to t-test analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in the table below.

Table 7: Summary of t-test statistics on classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig.	Remark
Male	104	64.59	9.31	307	-0.88	0.38	*Not significant
Female	205	65.53	8.56				

p>0.05

The result of analysis shown in the table above revealed that a t-value of -0.881 is not significant at 0.05 alpha level ($p>0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria based on gender is retained. This indicates that classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers does not depend on the gender of the respondents.

Research hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers based on institutional type.

To test this research hypothesis, the response to all the items were summed together and the data collected were subjected to ANOVA statistics. The result of the analysis is presented in table 7.

Table 7: Summary of ANOVA statistics on classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers based on institutional type

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Between Groups	10.23	2	5.12	0.07	0.94	*Not Significant
Within Groups	23918.24	306	78.16			
Total	23928.47	308				

p>0.05

The result of analysis shown on table 7 revealed that the F-value of 0.07 is not significant at 0.05 alpha level ($p>0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers based on institutional type is retained. This means that classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers does not depend on institutional type.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study revealed that there was a high level of pedagogical content knowledge of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria. It shows that the pre-service teachers have a high understanding on how to present complex concepts in ways that are accessible and engaging for students to promote deeper understanding and retention of content. These findings support the work of Dewey (2014) as it revealed that pre-service teachers who receive comprehensive training programs that integrate both theoretical knowledge and practical teaching experience tend to exhibit high levels of pedagogical content knowledge. According to a recent study by Darling-Hammond et al. (2023), teacher preparation programme that combine coursework on teaching methods with extensive field experiences enable pre-service teachers to develop a deeper understanding of how to teach specific content effectively. The study highlights that such integrated programs help future teachers to better translate their content knowledge into pedagogically sound teaching practices. They further asserted that professional development and teacher education policies have the potential to greatly affect teachers' abilities to teach and, as a result, students' abilities to learn. Teachers may have all the skills and all the knowledge but will still be worthless without practice.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that there is a high level of classroom management skills among pre-service teachers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. This reveals that pre-service teachers are well knowledgeable of the relevance of classroom management in effective teaching and learning. This was because good classroom management by the teachers is the basic predator of learning outcomes. This result was supported by Malmgren (2018) where it was revealed that the models and approaches of classroom management are foundations into which teachers build a management plan. It is a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to create a high-performing learning environment. Effective classroom management ensures that classes run smoothly, disruptive behaviour from students is kept to a minimum, and teaching materials and activities promote learning. This enables ultimate goal of getting the most out of the classroom experience. Also, Hudson and Hudson (2023) emphasised that observing and receiving feedback from experienced teachers help pre-service teachers refine their classroom management strategies. They stated that pre-service teachers who engage in mentoring programs and collaborative activities with veteran teachers develop better classroom management techniques.

More so, it was revealed from the findings that pre-service teachers had high knowledge level of instructional strategies in Ilorin Metropolis. It was revealed that pre-service teachers are well knowledgeable of the usage and relevance of teaching strategies for effective teaching and learning in the classroom to foster better understanding of the learners, and as well enhance teachers' knowledge. This corroborates the opinion of Vries et al. (2015) who opined that, teacher education programme enables pre-service teachers to develop and update knowledge and skills, reflecting on teaching practice experiences and collaborating with other colleagues. They further explained that concerning the development of knowledge and skills, pre-service teachers obtained practical and theoretical knowledge based on the subject matter they teach, together with general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge during their training in school. The teacher education programme often includes a variety of teaching models,

such as direct instruction, inquiry-based learning, and cooperative learning which enable pre-service teachers to apply diverse strategies in the classroom.

In addition, the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria based on gender. This study supports the notion that classroom teaching readiness is not influenced by gender but rather by the quality of teacher education programme and individual experiences. This corroborates the findings of Phillips and White (2023) who compared the classroom teaching readiness of male and female pre-service teachers using a standardized readiness assessment and the results showed no significant differences between genders in terms of preparedness for classroom management, lesson planning, and student engagement. This indicates that classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers does not depend on gender.

Also, it was found out that there is no significant difference in the classroom teaching readiness of pre-services teachers in Ilorin, Nigeria based on institutional type. This shows that the type of institution attended by pre-service teachers does not affect their classroom teaching readiness. It means that the classroom teaching readiness of pre-service teachers who attended federal, state or private institutional type are not different from each other. Miller and Lewis (2022) supported this finding when they emphasized that teacher preparation programs and field experiences were more critical factors influencing teaching readiness than the type of school where pre-service teachers were placed.

Conclusion

The study reveals that a comprehensive approach involving training programs, subject-specific instruction, mentorship, reflective practice, and technological integration can enhance the pedagogical content knowledge of pre-service teachers, classroom management skills, and knowledge of instructional strategies in preparing them to meet diverse student needs and promote positive educational outcomes. This implies that teachers' education programme should be targeted towards training that will equip the preservice teachers with essential skills in lesson planning, classroom management and students' engagement. Since this study shows no significant differences in pre-service teachers' classroom teaching readiness based on gender and institutional type, the teacher education programme should focus on real-world teaching experience that will enhance quality and self-development, and better prepare the teachers for diverse challenges they will face in classrooms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Teacher training institutions should encourage pre-service teachers to engage in reflective practice regularly. Reflecting on their teaching experiences helps them identify areas for improvement and develop more effective instructional strategies.

- ii. Institutions should implement more structured mentorship programs where pre-service teachers can collaborate with veteran teachers. Observing and receiving feedback from experienced teachers is crucial for refining classroom management strategies.
- iii. Teacher education programs should emphasise the use of instructional strategies that have been shown to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

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