



EXPLORING THE PERCEPTION OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS (ADE /B.ED.(HONS)) ABOUT THE CHALLENGES DURING PRACTICUM IN QUETTA CITY, PAKISTAN

Khadija Karim¹,

Nagina Gul²ⁱ,

Alia Ayub³,

Seema Azeem⁴

¹Assistant Professor,

Department of Education,

Sardar Bahdur Khan Women's University,

Quetta, Pakistan

²Assistant Professor, Dr.,

Department of Management Sciences,

Faculty of Management Sciences,

Balochistan University of Information Technology,

Engineering & Management Sciences, (BUIITEMS),

Quetta, Pakistan

³Associate Professor,

Department of Education,

Sardar Bahdur Khan Women's University,

Quetta, Pakistan

⁴Lecturer (Education),

Balochistan University of Information Technology,

Engineering & Management Sciences, (BUIITEMS),

Quetta, Pakistan

Abstract:

Teacher is the central cog in the machinery of Education. The quality and worth of the teachers determine the quality of Education. For the better education, the effective and committed teachers are needed. In ADE / B.Ed.(Hons) program, practicum is one of the essential components for practical experiences, school-based activities and teaching training to become the devoted and professional teacher. So, the present study investigated the perceptions on adequacy of practicum and highlight the challenges faced by prospective teachers. The study was conducted through using mixed method approach. Structured questionnaire and interview protocol were used for the data collection. Data was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The sample of 150 prospective teachers from colleges and universities, offering ADE/ B.Ed. program were

ⁱ Correspondence: email nagina.gul@buitms.edu.pk

selected through simple random sampling technique who completed their practicum. The analysis indicated the prospective teachers face variety of challenges such as no adequate support of school administration, lack of proper guidance and encouragement from university supervisors, no skills to design and implement classroom activities associated with teachings, behavior of cooperative teachers as they spend more time with them in schools and no proper meetings and seminars conducted to check the quality of work and problems of prospective teachers. Nevertheless, majority of the prospective teachers think that practicum is an important element for the preparation of professional life of teachers and found practicum to be a valuable experience.

Keywords: prospective teacher, practicum, ADE, B.Ed.(Hons), challenges

1. Introduction

Education is a national development programme for all purposes, the more we spend on Education in right direction the quicker we can develop the country on our ideological basis. This is impossible unless we pay more attention on the quality of teachers rather than the quantity. It demands devotion and dedication. In the oriental society a teacher is a preacher who can combine moral teaching with other secular subjects. To choose this sublime profession of teaching the prospective teachers get to opportunity to learn practically. In B.Ed.(Hons) four-year programme the school based practical experiences with the aim to assist the prospective teachers in in services- training to become professional teacher which is named "PRACTICUM". According to Brown and Brown (1990). The practicum is the essential component in the teacher training programme through this prospective teacher learn how to bring theory in practice because it increases the experiences of the individual before they go in the field of profession. In the study of Smith (2005) practicum is one of the important elements for prospective teacher to understand the environment, teaching learning process and individual differences. It creates efficacy and they come to realize how to bring theoretical studies in practical way. The results depict in the study of Calder (1993) that experiences of prospective teachers were differ some of them felt very grateful experiences and some were not agreed.

Practicum is the foundation to engage the prospective teachers to attain the various experiences in the classrooms before practice in real classrooms situation. It enables the prospective teachers to implement their knowledge and develop the skills in classroom. Practicum is the platform to polish out their hidden abilities and equip with modern teaching techniques. Throughout the practicum the prospective teachers learn and practice while in this time - period they also face various challenges so, to sort out those challenges the present study was conducted. The following objectives were formulated by keeping the view of practicum.

2. Objectives

- To investigate the perceptions of prospective teachers on adequacy of practicum in B.Ed.(Hons) program
- To highlight the challenges faced by prospective teachers during the practicum

2.1 Research Questions

- What are perceptions of prospective teachers on adequacy of practicum?
- Which challenges are faced by prospective teachers during the practicum?

2.2 Literature Review

The teaching of prospective teachers in different schools is given different names in the field of education. Some call it is teaching practice, some others call it practicum, some known it by the name of students teaching and studies in the field. (Haig &Tuck, 1999). The practicum is explained by different authors in a different way. It is a program of study or a course designed by experts, scheduled to send students of department of education or the prospective teachers in different other schools to impart lectures on different topics regarding their course (Mohan & Ghosh, 2011). According to (Schechter & Parkhrust, 1993) teaching practice is a practice or a training where the prospective teachers or student teachers try to teach in schools under the supervision of experienced teachers. The main purpose of teaching practice or practicum is to convert the theory of education/teaching in practice. Its purpose is to impart knowledge/teaching with different age, environment and level of students. This training not only contribute to the professional growth of students but also helps to increase the confidence of students (Malik, 2014).

It is a ground or as an opportunity provided to student teachers to apply the theory which they had studied during their course work i to practice or activity. (Barry & King, 2002). Without suitable preparation for education the professional education of teachers cannot be legalized for active tasks in today schools during practice. Teaching and learning are believed social activities in the classroom, that entail connections between not only the teachers and their students, but as well as among these parties and objects, equipment, classroom environment, curriculum as well. (Wright, 1988). The practical phase of teacher preparation commonly referred to as teaching practice is a crucial aspect of teacher preparatory programme in teacher training institutions in general such as school of education in colleges of education and faculties of education (Okorie, 1997). There are different factors the affects affect teaching practice or practicum positively and negatively. One of the most important factors that negatively affect the practicum is the duration of practicum (Lingam, 2005).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study was conducted through using mixed method approach. Structured questionnaire and interview protocol were used for the data collection. Data was both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

3.2 Population

All the prospective teachers enrolled in ADE and B.Ed. (Hons.) program in Quetta City.

3.3 Sample

Sample was drawn from 3 colleges and 2 universities situated in Quetta city. 25 prospective teachers enrolled in different semesters were drawn through simple random sampling technique.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

The following tools for data collection were developed:

- 5-point Likert scale survey questionnaire focusing on the challenges regarding time duration, task difficulty level, cooperation by the school authorities and skills developed by the practicum.
- semi structured interview protocol to find out the adequacy of the practicum.

3.5 Data Analysis

- quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive analysis by finding out the means, and inferential analysis by applying the independent sample t-test.
- qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis of the interview.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Table:1: t test to compare the views of the colleges and universities prospective teachers

	Leven's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means		
	F	Sig	t	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	.412	.512	1.41	.410	.149

The results show that there was no significant difference in the views of college and universities prospective teachers.

Table 2: Comparison of Data Regarding Different Challenges

Challenges	N	M	Std. Deviation	Variance
Duration of practicum	150	.699	1.06	1.17
Task difficulty level	150	.322	.823	.793
Cooperation by the school authorities	150	.213	1.23	1.99
Skills acquired by the practicum	150	.111	1.11	1.75

The highest mean (.699) show that the duration of practicum is the major challenge for the prospective teachers, then difficulty level of task is the challenge (M = .322), than they face difficulty in cooperation by the school authorities' (M = .213) and the skills acquiring by the practicum were the little challenge for them (M = .111)

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The thematic analysis of the interview generates the following themes.

4.2.1 Difficult in Use

About all the respondents responded that practicum activities are difficult and tiering in use. Practicum activities are more time taking, it includes observations, reflections by cooperative teachers and prospective teachers, interviews with teachers, lessons delivery, seminars triad meetings etc.

4.2.2 Time Shortage

Majority of the respondent responded that the time allocated for the implementation of the assigned task in practicum is too short, the tasks which are mentioned in practicum course guides are time taking, they need to be completed in the whole semester, rather than to go for few days to the schools.

4.2.3 Cooperation by the School Side

Prospective teachers responded that *"we feel difficulty in the application of different practicum activities, because of the uncooperative attitudes of the school teachers and administrators"*. The responded that they feel prospective teachers as a hurdle in the completion of their school curriculum.

4.2.4 Lack of Proper Guidance by the Supervisors

Some of the prospective teachers responded that supervisors do not provide us the proper guidance. They responded that the supervisors are even do not have enough knowledge about practicum activities. So, the supervisors can't provide us the proper guidance which in turn make it difficult to design and practice the practicum in a proper way.

5. Discussion

The result of the study showed that the prospective teachers were facing great difficulty in completing their practicum tasks in the given period, because the tasks' difficulty level in practicum is very high and it takes more time to design and then to implement in the classrooms. The results also indicate that prospective teachers of both colleges and universities facing difficulties in the implementation of the practicum tasks because of the uncooperative attitude of the school authorities. School authorities do not cooperate them, as they feel that prospective teachers are wasting their time and school teachers can't complete their curriculum because of the practicum activities of the prospective teachers.

Moreover, the comparison of the views of the prospective teachers from different elementary colleges and the universities showed that there was insignificant difference in their views. It means that the practicum activities are a great challenge. It should rephrase and reorganize at its curriculum level.

6. Conclusion

It is concluded from the results of the study that practicum tasks are good for developing and enhancing the teaching skills, but the prospective teachers are facing great challenges in its implementation. So, there is a greater need to solve the challenges to make its smooth implication and achieve its objectives.

7. Recommendations

- **Feedback hours and guidance are required to be extend**

Extend feedback hours provided by the supervisor at the university; the feedback sessions should provide ample opportunities for reflection-on-action. Due to limited time, these sessions last no longer than five minutes during break times and provide the student teachers with limited information on their teaching with comments such as "good job", "I like it" etc. Such feedback not only limits students' chances to identify their weaknesses and strengths but also doesn't provide opportunities for self-reflection. There is no doubt that trainees learn better when they find out their weaknesses themselves rather than being told by others, which leads to autonomy, the development of critical thinking skills, and increased awareness of their actions and decisions. But expert advice on how to improve teaching practice will contribute towards improving teaching practice for the student teachers

- **More emphasize on quality rather than quantity**

Emphasize quality over quantity. Granted, completing a certain number of lessons is a requirement, but the pressure to complete this certain number often overwhelms students to the point where they start stringing together poorly made lessons just to get

done with task. The supervisors should encourage improving the quality of lessons instead of being fixated on making students make a certain number of lessons.

- **Administration support necessary**

The administrative bodies of schools where practicums take place seldom cooperate with the student teachers. From refusing to acknowledge their participation and involvement in helping children learn, to sometimes displaying flat out annoyance at their presence the school administrations don't facilitate the student teachers in their endeavour to learn and improve the quality of lesson plan for the students

- **Focused on triad meetings**

The triad- consisting of the cooperating teacher, the supervisor and the students should sit together every two weeks to discuss the progress made by the student and work towards improving the quality of lessons delivered by the student teachers. Most often it is never the triad working in cooperation, but only the supervisor and the student teacher. The supervisors, by the powers they have, should ensure that these meetings take place regularly. The supervisors should be receptive to the students' grievances and transfer them tactfully to the cooperative teacher without compromising the professional relationship shared between the three.

- **Practice needed before delivery lessons in real classroom situations**

Student teachers should be made to deliver sample lessons in front of cooperative teacher in school or university before they deliver actual lessons in the classrooms at their designated schools. Invariably, students prepare and deliver lessons that lack the effectiveness to achieve desired results. Other times students prepare lessons that work incredibly well in theory but lack the skills to masterfully transfer the content by using the methods stated in the lesson. Employing strategies like micro teaching can prove to be efficient in this regard.

- **Training of supervisors and cooperative teachers**

Supervisor and cooperative teachers are also facing difficulty in communicating the practicum tasks to the prospective teachers in an effective way. So, training programs should be organized for them. And both are provided the training in the same sittings, so that both can feel even challenges of each other. And share their suggestions to solve the issues.

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