

Prospective Teachers' Experiences during Practice Teaching

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Abstract

Practice teaching is a period that a prospective teacher spends at a school as part of his or her training. It is practice teaching by a prospective teacher with the direction of an expert teacher. This paper aimed to explore the experiences of prospective teachers during teaching practice by using qualitative research design. The data were collected from eight prospective teachers of elementary masters' program studying in the Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, through semi-structured interviews. To analyze the data thematic analysis was used. Findings reveal that majority of prospective teachers face different problems and challenges. Some feel nervous in the beginning and class management was big issue for them. They face 'lack of co-operation from the teachers and administration. Prospective teachers applied the strategies which they learned from their teachers to overcome these challenges. As a whole, they enjoyed a lot during teaching practice. It is recommended that supervisors may supervise the prospective teachers during practice teaching and give them feedback, which may help them to improve their capabilities. The research has important implications for prospective teachers, policy makers in universities and the administrators of other training teaching institutes in Pakistan.

Keywords: Prospective teachers, practice teaching

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Introduction

Teaching is a process that transmits knowledge from one generation to the next. Practice teaching is an essential element of prospective teachers' training. It provides experience to the prospective teachers in the real 'teaching and learning' situation (Koross, 2016). During practice teaching a prospective teacher has the chance to get the skills of teaching before really getting the actual experience of teaching. It is an opportunity for prospective teachers to "bridge the gap between theory and practice" (Mokoena, 2017; Morrison & Werf, 2010).

In support of the teaching practice many researchers have written about the shock of reality, a phrase referring to the difficulty of shifting from theoretical training and academic knowledge to the actual work of teaching. Teachers 'training institutions' are not only teaching theoretical knowledge but also instructing the practical skills to prospective teachers. Practice teaching usually has the duration of thirty to forty days. Only one in five teachers feels well prepared to work in a modern classroom (Heeralal & Bayaga, 2011; Koross, 2016).

Azeem (2011) states, during practice teaching under the direction of an expert teacher the prospective teacher enhance their skills and confidence. Practice teaching defines as the chance given to the prospective teachers to improve their professional ability in the real classroom situation. Mopolisa and Tshabalala (2014) state that practice teaching mentions to the period in which a prospective teacher acquires firsthand experience in working with a specific set of learners. Niak describes about practice teaching as in practice the prospective teacher feel anxiety at start, but under the continuing supervision of experienced teacher they apply their theory into practice (Niak, 2008).

Andabi (2010) state, that practice teaching is the most challenging experience for prospective teachers in the teacher education program. It is commonly said that 'theory without practice is empty, practice without theory is blind' (Morrison & Werf, 2010). Practice teaching plays a key role in 'bridging the gap between theory and practice'. Practice teaching is the significant element of the prospective teacher's program (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2018). Quality of prospective teachers is not only characterized by practice teaching, but it reflects the individual values, perceptions and experiences (Msangya et al., 2016). Throughout the practice teaching prospective teachers have the chance to apply their learned knowledge in the dimensions of teaching methods, principles and techniques (Mahmood et al., 2018).

Prospective teachers have opportunity in practice teaching to put their 'theoretical knowledge into practice'. There is difference between the theoretical

knowledge and the real practical situation in the classroom. In teaching practice prospective teachers effort to resolve these discrepancies (Mukeredzi, 2017).

Mapolisa et al. (2014) states, that prospective teachers experience the planning and organizing the classroom tasks in real classroom situation. They also learn to manage the unfamiliar situations, controlling the learners and establishing a working relationship with the permanent teachers of the schools. Prospective teachers' during the practice teaching have the opportunity to establish the attitude whether the teaching is the right career choice for them or not (Heeralal, 2014).

Prospective teachers should attend the teaching practice programs. When prospective teachers start teaching practice they must have the knowledge about the people and the situation in which they work. They also know about the instructional materials, curriculum policies of school and must be aware with the specific units in which the learners are involved.

Nevertheless the importance of teaching practice sometimes becomes demoralizing and sometimes lot of enjoyment is there. It is diverse feeling that can make or break the prospective teachers (Azeem, 2011). This article explores prospective teachers' experiences during practice teaching and recommends the mean to accomplish the desired expectations from teaching practice.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the prospective teachers' experiences about teaching practice.
2. To identify the challenges faced by prospective teachers during teaching practice.
3. To suggest measures to overcome the problems faced by prospective teachers during teaching practice.

Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of prospective teachers about teaching practice?
2. What are the challenges faced by the prospective teachers during teaching practice?
3. What are the measures to overcome the problems faced by prospective teachers throughout teaching practice?

Method of Study

The study was qualitative in nature. This study explores the experiences of prospective teachers' during teaching practices in "Institute of Education and Research University of the Punjab Lahore". Data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires from eight prospective teachers of IER. The study aims at evaluating the current experiences of prospective teachers' in "Institute of Education and Research University of the Punjab Lahore".

Sample of the Study

The purposive sampling technique was adopted to conduct the semi-structured interviews from the participants to explore the experiences of prospective teachers during teaching practice. Purposive sampling technique was used to explore the experiences of prospective students. All the participants must have the teaching experience during their master's program so two male and six female prospective teachers were selected for the sample of the study.

Instrument and Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. Participants' interviews are worthwhile for getting the story behind their experiences (Mukeredzi, 2017). The set of developed interview questions were focused on a complete consideration of the experiences confronted by prospective teachers during teaching practice. Validity of the instrument will be ensured after taking two experts opinions and conduct one interview from prospective teacher for the purpose of ensuring the clarity of questions and relevance.

The researcher personally conducts the interview by the help of research facilitator who record the information during interviews. The research facilitator was a PhD scholar. Through telephone calls primary contact was acknowledged with the interviewee. Due to the issue of time management the participants were interviewed in the university during their free time. To identifying the themes thematic analysis was used.

Qualitative Results



Figure1: Main Themes

The main themes of this study are nervous in beginning, built confidence, class management, practical implementation, increase time duration, lack of co-operation, lot of enjoyment, lesson plan is necessary. These themes are emerged from the verbatim of the participants. Aim of this research was to explore the experiences of prospective teachers' during practice teaching. Recorded data were transcribed into text. After reading the text many times the data was transcribed, verbatim and themes were made, by using thematic analysis. The following themes are constructed from the data.

Table 1
Participants' Verbatim and Generating Themes

Participants No.	Participants' Verbatim	Themes
P 1, 8	"I was so much nervous in the beginning"	Nervous in beginning
P 2, 4	"Teaching practice built my confidence "	Built confidence
P 3, 6	"Class management was big challenge for me"	Class management
P 6.8	"I used the strategies which I learned from my	Practical implementation

	teachers”	
P 5, 7	“The duration of TP should be two or three months”	Increase time duration
P 2, 7	“The teachers of the school were not co-operative”	Lack of co-operation
P 4, 8	“we decorated our classes and enjoyed so much during TP”	Lot of enjoyment
P 3, 6	“It was very difficult to teach without lesson plan”	Lesson plan is necessary

Theme 1: Nervous in Beginning

Most of the participants were nervous and feel anxiety in the beginning of teaching practice. It was difficult to manage the problems and challenges which the prospective teachers face during teaching practice. P2 stated: “I was so much nervous and feel anxiety when we reached for teaching practice”. P8 stated: “I was so much nervous in the beginning of the teaching practice”. Literature shows that prospective teachers in the beginning of teaching practice feel anxiety but under the continuing supervision of experienced teacher apply their theory into practice (Niak, 2008).

Theme 2: Built the Confidence

Majority of the prospective teachers built their confidence during teaching practice. They learned that how to teach and manage the problems confidently. P2 reported: “Teaching practice built my confidence”. P4 reported: “Teaching practice built my confidence and skills”.

Literature review shows that, time spent by prospective teachers in real classroom situation with the direction of expert teacher enhance skills and confidence of prospective teachers (Azeem, 2011).

Theme 3: Class Management

Majority of prospective teachers face difficulties in class management during teaching practice. They learned that how to manage the class challenges. P3 stated: “class management was big challenge for me”. P6 stated: “class management was big issue”.

Literature review shows that practice teaching is the most challenging experience for prospective teachers. Prospective teacher anticipated to fulfill the tasks of a teacher to manage the class, which according to Mapolisa et al. (2014) is inspiring but thought-provoking.

Theme 4: Practical Implementation

Majority of prospective teachers use their teaching techniques or strategies during teaching practice. They implement their theory into practice. Teaching practice plays a key role in “bridging the gap between theory and practice”. P6 stated: “I used the strategies which I learned from my teachers”. P8 stated: “I used the theory and strategies which were taught by my teachers”.

Literature review shows that practice teaching is involved in “bridging the gap between theory and practice”. Practice teaching gives possibility to the prospective teachers to assimilate “theory and practice” (Msangya et al., 2016). Prospective teachers use the theoretical knowledge in the areas of teaching techniques, principles and methods in practice teaching (Mahmood et al., 2018).

Theme 5: Increase Time Duration

Majority of prospective teachers approved that the duration of teaching practice time should be increased from one month to three months that’s why they gain more experience and skills during teaching practice that how to teach, whom to teach and what to teach. P5 stated: “The duration of teaching practice should be two months”. P7 stated: “The duration of teaching practice should be increased”. Literature shows that at the completion of practice teaching prospective teachers gain more skills and experience about how to use theoretical knowledge into practical implications (Heeralal & Bayaga, 2011). It shows that duration of teaching practice generally of one month that is against the statement of prospective students to increase the time period of teaching practice.

Theme 6: Lack of Co-Operation

Majority of prospective students stated that the teachers of the schools were not co-operated with them. The administration does not facilitate them. They face many problems due to lack of co-operation. P2 stated: “The teachers of the school were not co-operative”. P7 stated: “The administration and teachers were not co-operative”. Literature review shows that prospective teachers have worries about their capability to manage the inexperienced circumstances, handling students or creating a functional association with the permanent teachers of the schools. Practice teaching provides the opportunity for prospective teachers to experience the reality of being a teacher (Heeralal, 2014).

Theme 7: Lot of Enjoyment

Majority of prospective teachers get enjoyment by decorating the classrooms with their models, charts and pictures. This activity makes them happy. P4 stated: “I decorated my class and enjoyed so much during teaching practice”. P8 stated: “I enjoyed

so much during practice teaching". Literature review shows that practice teaching sometimes become demoralizing and sometimes lot of enjoyment is there, it is diverse feelings that make or break the prospective teachers (Azeem, 2011).

Theme 8: Lesson Plan is Necessary

Majority of students stated that lesson plan is necessary during teaching plan. With lesson plan they know that what to teach, how to teach, whom to teach. This models, charts or pictures they can use in their lessons to make them more interesting and understandable.

P 3stated: "It was very difficult to teach without lesson plan". P6 stated: "Lesson plan is very necessary during teaching practice". Literature review shows that the prospective teachers must be aware with the specific units of lesson in which the students be engaged. Prospective teachers need to familiar with the curriculum policy of school. The instructional material being used, prospective teachers must know : school calendar, school hour, play ground rules, duties of teachers, use of library, audio-visual materials for making lesson plan, learning to teach is a complex process (Wagenaor, 2005).

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of prospective teachers' at "Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore" during teaching practice. On the basis of information sought from participants following finding were drawn. Semi-structured questionnaire was developed after the review of related literature about experiences of prospective teachers' during teaching practice. Interviews were transcribed; codes and themes were emerged from the transcription.

Conclusions

The permanent teachers and the administration of the school were not co-operative. They did not facilitate the prospective teachers so they face many problems due to lack of co-operation. Prospective teachers feel anxiety in teaching the students in the beginning, after some period of time they overcome the challenges by using the teaching strategies or methods which they learned from their teachers. They get experience during teaching practice that how the theory can be changed in practice, increase their confidence and skills during teaching practice. They enjoyed a lot by decorating their classes with charts, models and pictures. They have come to know that lesson plan is necessary for preparing the lesson. It helps them to know what to teach, how to teach and whom to teach. Practice teaching plays a key role in bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Recommendations

On the basis of data analysis and conclusions following recommendations are drawn:

The authoritative behaviour and lack of cooperation of administration in schools are creating hurdles for prospective teachers to use innovative pedagogies during teaching practice. It is recommended that the institute administration may negotiate with schools' administration to increase acceptability of prospective teachers in schools, and supervisor teachers may provide suitable guidance and supportive attitude to help them in adjusting in school environment and guide them to use different teaching strategies. Supervisor teachers may give prospective teachers choice in subjects' selection and help them in lesson planning and suitable audio-visual aids.

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