

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF B.ED. STUDENTS ABOUT INTERNSHIP AND SESSIONAL WORK

Suman Gupta

The two-year B.Ed. programme has three components, i.e. theory, practicum and internship. Sessional work and internship programme in teacher education are of great significance because they ensure the preparation of prospective teachers in a professional manner. The study dealt with the perceptions, experiences and challenges of the pupil teachers during their internship and sessional work. The sample for the study was chosen from the college where the author was working and consisted of 80 student-teachers selected through random sampling. Data was collected using an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that student-teachers viewed the internship programme as a real opportunity to refine and improve their teaching skills in an actual school setting. Student-teachers were also of the view that the concerned supervisor played an important role in enhancing their teaching skills. The results of the interviews showed that hands-on experiences and longer duration of field experience helped the students in understanding the classroom teaching process in a better manner. The challenges perceived by student-teachers were mainly in the area of classroom management, long distance of practice school from home, a large number of lesson plans, conducting constructivist approach-based lessons at the school level, administration, scoring and interpretation of psychological tests, data collection for action research, preparing presentations for sessional work, etc. Some measures were also suggested by student-teachers for making the internship programme and sessional work more fruitful.

KEYWORDS: Sessional Work, Internship Programme and Student-Teacher

Suman Gupta ✉

Assistant Professor, MIER College of Education (Autonomous), Jammu
Email: suman.gupta@miercollege.in

INTRODUCTION

The future of a nation is shaped in its classrooms and teacher is the architect who shapes the destiny. Well qualified and trained teachers lead communities and nations towards better and higher quality of life. Teachers are expected to create soul cohesion, national integration and a learning society. It is, therefore, essential for a nation to have a sound and effective programme of teacher preparation. The teacher education programme needs to be upgraded and updated periodically. The NCTE has recommended that the B.Ed. course should be of two years duration and has prepared a curriculum framework for the Two-year B.Ed. Programme which was implemented in 2015. The curriculum aims at developing specific language proficiency of the pupil teachers by providing them opportunities through different activities through sessional work and course content.

The B.Ed. Two-year programme has three components i.e. theory, practicum and internship. Sessional work and internship programme in teacher education is of great significance because it ensures the professional preparation of prospective teachers. These provide them with a practical opportunity to develop true understanding of the teaching profession and apprise them of the future prospects of the teaching profession. In the present study, the internship programme refers to the mandatory activities suggested by the NCTE-2014 guidelines and B.Ed. two year course syllabus which mentions activities like macro lessons in school, taking part in morning assembly, preparing time table, organizing certain activities in a school, checking the home task given to the students, maintaining attendance registers, participation in staff meetings and preparing notices, examination papers, letters to parents, maintenance of school records, and knowledge of preparing school leaving certificates etc. This internship programme has to be completed during actual teaching practice in schools (NCTE, 2015).

The term internship has been borrowed from medical education as it is similar to the hospital experience where the medical doctor is required to have field experience under the guidance of a senior doctor before he is allowed to start practice of his own. Thus, internship is an integral part of his/her professional preparation as a doctor. Internship in teaching includes practice teaching and wide variety of field experiences under the guidance of a competent or expert supervisor. The learner tests his theoretical understanding acquired through pedagogy classes in the field during internship. The intern shares all the significant experiences going on in the school environment and develops meaningful skills and attitudes towards his profession. The internship is a school based plan with pre-service teachers attending their assigned schools for 15 days. Internship provides opportunities to the interns so that they could consolidate links between theory and practice which makes the pupil teacher ready to enter the teaching profession. Internship in teaching is the joint responsibility of training colleges/practicing schools (co-operating

schools), co-operating teachers, students and the college supervisors or teacher educators. Thus, internship is very essential for today's teachers because it gives proper training to the pupil-teacher for better understanding of all the students and the school system. It builds confidence among the pupil-teachers. A trained teacher can essentially face the class with confidence. He/she can tackle many odd situations and he does not run away from problematic situations. Internship is the programme that reduces the complexities among teachers and helps the teacher to face the class in a better way than the teacher without a proper training. It develops positive attitude for continuous learning and keeping interns updated with latest content and methodology. Actually, it helps the teacher to build upon their existing skills to become autonomous, reflective, collaborative manager of learning ready to enter the teaching profession.

Internship is a training programme for a teacher, but some persons are not in favour of the training of teachers because they have the opinion that only mastery over the subjects and getting degree is important. Nobody is concerned with the practice teaching or internship practices. They think that it is just wastage of time. This is a big issue in the quality of teacher education these days.

Sessional work as a part of the B.Ed. curriculum was included in two years programme from 2015 and is part of the internal evaluation system designed to continually assess the trainees performance on the basis of classes/ seminars/ activities/ participation in activities and preparation of assignment/projects. Record of participation in community activities and administration of psychological tests is also part of sessional work for teacher trainees.

Internship and sessional work are new innovations in the field of education. They play very important role in improving the competency and effectiveness of teacher. Internship and sessional work modify the pupil teacher's behaviour according to the specified objectives. If a teacher is trained, he/she can impart the knowledge to the students in a better way. Keeping in view all facts the investigator decided to conduct research in this area to ascertain the experiences, perceptions and challenges of pupil teachers towards internship and sessional work.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Pillai (2004) studied the impact of practicing schools on quality teaching practice of teacher trainees. The objectives of the study were: (1) to identify the facilities available in the practicing schools; (2) to see if there is any influence of guide teachers on the performance of teacher trainees; (3) to assess the quality of performance of the teacher trainees during the practice teaching session; and (4) to see whether there is any impact of facilities available in the practicing

schools on the quality of performance of the teacher trainees. Findings were: (1) 37.5% of the selected practicing schools provided sufficient facilities for teacher trainees. The facility was low or poor in nearly 50% of the schools, (2) all the guide teachers in the practicing schools were interested in guiding the teacher trainees, (3) the teaching practice of teacher trainees was satisfactory only in 31.3% of schools. In more than 40% of the schools, the teaching practice was not satisfactory, (4) the facilities available in practicing schools played a significant role in improving the quality of teaching practice of teacher trainees.

Hergert (2009) analysed the internships of 114 undergraduate and graduate students to determine what factors account for the most valuable internship experience. The results show a strong statistical correlation between the perceived value of the internship and the student's demographic profile, the structure of the internship, and the connection to the students' career plans. These findings provide a basis for designing successful internship programmes in business education.

Daniel (2011) assessed that East Tennessee State University graduate students' perceptions on the effectiveness of internship experiences as students explored the implementation of ISLLC Standards and the role of mentor support as they prepared for the principalship. The participating university for this study is located in Johnson City, Tennessee. Participants obtained their administrative license from 2005-2010 and worked in one of 19 northeast Tennessee, North Carolina, and southwest Virginia school districts. Specifically, this research assessed the perceived value of the 540 hour internship experience, implementation of ISLLC Standards, and the perceived value of the site-based and university based mentors as interns completed their activities in multiple settings.

Papadimitriou (2014) studied that the dynamic science students (i.e., individuals who changed from one science career to another during high school) showed the strongest response in relation to the ability of internships to produce retention in the science pipeline. The non-science-to-science career changers showed the strongest responses with respect to internship impact on college major and career choice. The science-to non-science changers showed consistent and marginal impact responses and very few described internships as impacting. Static science students found internships to be especially impacting on career choice and on retention. Lastly, static non-science students acknowledged great impact of internships.

Chakrabarty and Behera (2014) explored the attitude of the secondary female teacher-trainees pursuing their B. Ed. course in the teacher training institutions under The University of Burdwan. The female teacher-trainees belonging to Govt. sponsored and private B. Ed. colleges were the target population of the study. Administering Likert-type scale their opinions were quantified. At last the scores were calculated and t-test was done to know the

attitudinal differences between two different types of female teacher-trainees, namely, deputed-fresher, govt.-private etc. The findings show that there was significant difference on the attitude of the secondary female teacher-trainees pursuing their B. Ed. Course from govt. and private Colleges.

Kumar's (2016) study aimed at finding out the significant difference of gender, stream and qualification in the attitude of pupil teachers towards internship. The investigator formulated null hypotheses to test the significant differences of gender, stream and qualification in the attitude of the pupil teachers towards internship as a part of B.Ed curriculum. For this purpose, the investigator used Attitude Scale prepared by the investigator himself. The data was collected from 80 pupil teachers from District Kathua. In order to analyse the data the investigator used three-way ANOVA. The main findings of the study were, there exists significant difference in the attitude of male and female pupil teachers towards internship. There existed significant triple interactional difference of gender, stream and academic qualification in the attitude of pupil teacher towards internship. No significant differences were found in stream, qualification, gender and stream, gender and qualification and stream and qualification in the attitude of pupil teacher towards internship as a part of B.Ed. curriculum.

Sao and Behera (2016) attempted to study the student-teachers attitude towards Two-year B.Ed. Programme with special reference to NCTE New Regulation, 2014 in Purulia district of West Bengal. 260 Student-Teachers were taken as representative sample of the whole population. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for selecting the B.Ed. Colleges. For selecting the student teachers stratified random sampling was adopted. An attitude scale was used for collecting the data. The study also revealed that male and female, pre-service and in-service, general and SC, general and ST, general and SC/ST, general and OBC as well as less than 5 years and above 5 years teaching experience student-teachers attitude towards two-year B.Ed. programme did not differ significantly, on the other hand, Rural and Urban as well as Govt. and Private B.Ed. college student-teachers attitude towards two-year B.Ed. Programme differ significantly.

Sahoo and Sharma (2018) studied the student teachers perceptions towards curriculum reforms in various teacher education programme (B.Ed., M.Ed. & D.El.Ed). The sample of the study consisted of 300 students of teacher education programmes offered by RIE, Bhubaneswar (50 B.A./B.Sc. B.Ed., 50 B.Ed. and 50 M.Ed.) and Radhanath IASE, Cuttack (50 D.El.Ed, 50 B.Ed. and 50 M.Ed.). Data were collected with the help of a questionnaire. The components of the tool consisted of different areas of curriculum, viz; perspectives in education, curriculum pedagogic studies and practicum and school internship. Data were analysed descriptively. It was noticed that a large majority of M.Ed. students gave high opinion about different items covering three components of curriculum. A large majority of B.Ed. and B.A./B.Sc. B.Ed. programme

students gave favourable opinion about curriculum reform. Similarly, a large majority of D.El.Ed. students expressed positive views about different areas of few teacher education curriculums. This study concluded that the curriculum reforms in teacher education have been appreciated by the student teachers. Hence, appropriate steps must be taken to stabilize teacher education curriculum in view of making it more realistic and relevant to teaching learning system

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives:

1. To assess the experiences and perceptions of student-teachers about the internship programme.
2. To identify the challenges faced by student-teachers during the internship programme.
3. To assess the experiences and perceptions of student-teachers about the sessional work.
4. To identify the challenges faced by Student teachers during the sessional work.

SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY

The population for the study comprised of 120 student-teachers of B.Ed. belonging to the fourth semester of a B.Ed. college where the author was working. Out of 120 student-teachers, 80 student-teachers were selected as the sample for the study using random sampling technique.

TOOLS USED FOR THE STUDY

Following tools have been used in the study:

1. A Self-prepared Questionnaire to assess the experiences, challenges and perceptions of student-teachers about internship.
2. Semi structured interviews to assess the experiences, challenges and perceptions of student teachers about sessional work.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Objective 1: To assess the experiences and perceptions of Student-teachers about the internship programme.

The number and responses of students about their experience and perceptions about the internship programme are given in Table 1.

Table1**Experience/Perception of Students During Internship.**

S. No	Statements	Response in Percentage			
		(N)	YES	(N)	NO
1	With practice teaching, I have learnt to take responsibilities as a teacher	56	70%	24	30%
2	Practice teaching helps me to gain confidence in teaching	68	85%	12	15%
3	Practice teaching proved useful in improving upon my classroom management skills	60	75%	20	20%
4	Supervision of teaching practice helped me in developing a disposition in effective teaching	64	80%	16	20%
5	I am able to conduct morning assembly	56	90%	24	30%
6	I am able to write notices	56	70%	24	30%
7	I am able to write letters to parents regarding the performance of students	60	75%	20	20%
8	I am able to prepare question papers	72	80%	8	10%
9	Satisfied with the role of the supervisor in enhancing my teaching skills	80	100%	0	0%

Based on the results given in Table 1 student-teachers viewed that the internship programme provides a real opportunity to refine and improve their teaching skills in actual school settings. 70% students learnt to take responsibilities as a teacher. 85% students gained confidence in teaching. 75% students improved their classroom management skills while 80% students developed a disposition towards effective teaching. 90% students were able to conduct morning assembly, 70% students were able to write notices, 75% students were able to write letters to parents regarding the performance of students and 80% students were able to prepare question papers for students. 100% student-teachers were of the opinion that the concerned supervisor played an important role in enhancing their teaching skills.

Objective 2: To identify the challenges faced by student-teachers during the internship programme.

The number and responses of students about the challenges faced by students during internship are given in Table 2.

Table 2**Challenges Faced by Students During Internship.**

S. No	Statements	Response in Percentage			
		(N)	YES	(N)	NO
1	Classroom Management	64	80%	16	20%
2	Long distance of practice school	60	75%	20	20%
3	More number of lesson plans	80	100%	0	0%
4	Conducting constructivist lessons at school level	80	100%	0	0%
5	Cooperation of government school teachers	40	50%	40	40%
6	Interaction with school students	60	75%	20	20%
7	Resources and infra-structure of practicing schools	80	100%	0	0%
8	Designing and preparing teaching aids and materials	64	80%	16	20%

Based on the results given in Table 2, it can be seen that 80% students faced difficulty in classroom management, 75% students faced difficulty due to the long distance of practice school from their home, 100% students expressed that the number of lesson plans to be prepared was cumbersome and students faced difficulty in conducting lessons based on the constructivists approach at the school level while 75% students faced difficulty in interaction with school students. 50% students also faced difficulty due to non-cooperation of government school teachers, 100% students faced difficulty due to the resources and infra-structure available in practicing schools and almost 80% students faced difficulty in designing and preparing teaching aids and materials required for teaching practice.

Objective 3: To assess the experiences and perceptions of student-teachers about the sessional work.

The number and responses of students about their experience and perceptions of sessional work are given in Table 3.

From the results given in Table 3 it can be seen that Student-teachers perceived their sessional work as beneficial as 100% students were able to prepare presentations in, 75% students were able to make charts / posters on different topics and 100% students were able to write assignments. Besides, 100% students were able to prepare the diagnostic tests, 80% students were able to prepare question papers based on J&K state board or CBSE pattern, 60% students were able to prepare low cost teaching aids and 100% students had

improved their writing and reading skills. Results also show that 70% students were able to collect and analyse data for psychological testing and 70% students were able to prepare action research proposals.

Table 3**Experience/Perceptions of Students During Sessional Work.**

S. No	Statements	Response in Percentage			
		(N)	YES	(N)	NO
1	You are able to Prepare presentations in sessional work	80	100%	0	0%
2	You are able to make charts / posters on different topics	60	75%	20	20%
3	You are able to write assignments	80	100%	0	0%
4	You are able to prepare the diagnostic test	80	100%	0	0%
5	You are able to prepare question papers	64	80%	16	20%
6	You are able to prepare low cost teaching aids	60	75%	20	20%
7	Your writing and reading skills have improved	80	100%	0	0%
8	You are able to collect and analyse data for psychological testing	56	70%	24	30%
9	You can prepare action research proposals	56	70%	24	30%

Objective 4: To identify the challenges faced by student-teachers during the sessional work.

The number and responses of students about the challenge faced by students during sessional work are given in Table 4.

Table 4**Challenges Faced by Students During Sessional Work.**

S. No	Statements	Response in Percentage			
		(N)	YES	(N)	NO
1	Writing and reading skills in English	56	70%	24	30%
2	Collecting and analysing data to do psychological tests	80	100%	0	0%
3	Preparing action research proposals	72	90%	8	10%
4	Data collection for action research	80	100%	0	0%
5	The communication mechanism to complete the sessional work	72	90%	8	10%
6	Time Management	56	70%	24	30%

Based on the responses of the students given in Table 4 we can see that 70% students faced problem in writing and reading skills in English, 100% students faced problems in data collection and analysing data to do psychological tests, 100% students faced problems in preparing action research proposals and all the students faced problems in data collection for action research. Besides, 90% students faced problems in the communication mechanism to complete the sessional work and 70% students faced the problems of time management.

Based on the results of the study, the followings suggestions can be made for improving the process of internship and sessional work:

- More exercise should be given on practical aspects. New technologies should be used for making teaching learning process more effective during internship.
- Use of innovative and child centered pedagogy needs to be encouraged during internship programme. In-service refresher courses should be introduced to acquaint teachers with latest technology and innovations.
- Supervisors should be guided to use checklist, rating scale and written analysis for observing pedagogical practices of student-teachers in real classroom and School activities.
- The practice of “Peer observation” needs to be strengthened.
- Teacher educators should have the knowledge of all skills of Micro, Macro lessons, Constructivist approach and all other activities related to the sessional work.
- Student-teachers should select their lessons according to the school/college syllabus in this way there will be no loss of students' studies in practising schools.
- The duration of the internship programme should be extended as it is a time-consuming activity.
- The communication mechanism among student-teachers need to be strengthened so that they can easily write their reflections and prepare their sessional files.
- A set of written guidelines about internship programme from the concerned department should be given to the concerned student-teachers and principals of the concerned schools so that they may act according to the rules and regulations as mention in the document and conduct activities in a structured way.

- The principals of collaborative schools and student-teachers should be briefed before the internship programme so that all activities could be conducted in a smooth manner.

CONCLUSION

The analyses and interpretation of data and research outcomes clearly indicate that internship programme and sessional work are effective ways to give training to the student-teachers about real world of work. The research study has implications for teachers, principals and supervisors. It gives them an opportunity to integrate theory and practice, plan and deliver lessons properly, critically analyse their own and peers teaching styles and improved them in the light of feedback given by supervisors. Through this programme they understand the role and responsibilities of professional teachers. Internship programme and sessional work also gives them an opportunity to understand different aspects of school programme and improve their skills and abilities in teaching profession. An effective and improved internship programme and proper conduct of sessional work are required for developing student-teachers' personalities as true professionals in the field of education.

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