CHALLENGES FACED BY PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS DURING ONLINE TEACHING PRACTICE

RESEARCH PROJECT

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Introduction

Education has the most significant position in the life of generations to develop one's own personality, abilities, capacities, attitudes and to know how the balanced personality of a person can help him. The educational institutions are responsible to provide learners such environment that is conducive and in which learner's potential can be maximized. The teachers and their qualification have great importance in educational system. As the teachers' education and their skills required for effective teaching have direct link with the students' performance and results. To ensure the quality result of students we need well qualified and well-trained teachers and for that we need to see the ways and means of teachers' training.

COVID-19 has resulted in shutdown of schools all across the world. Globally, over 1.2 billion children are out of the classroom. One positive outcome of the lockdown is the acceleration in adoption of digital technologies. India is not an exception to this. Educational institutions across India has suspended the physical classrooms and there is a shift to online classes. This transition has been smooth for most private institutions and the public ones are still adapting. Teaching in a conventional learning environment is different from teaching online. Virtual classrooms have given a different perspective on the role of the teacher. Online teaching requires the teacher to take on some different roles than those to which they were accustomed. As COVID pandemic has taken the world by storm, technology is now the highest human hour time consumer. The education industry also has switched to online teaching and learning platforms, making learning limitless. Stay home, Work from Home and Learn at Home are the new realities now. Traditional methods of teaching are rapidly getting substituted and reformed and teachers have to come up with innovative pedagogies to redefine learning in a virtual space (Deepika, 2020). In this scenario, the prospective teachers are put into a situation of undergoing their teaching practices online.

This project attempts to study the challenges and difficulties faced by prospective teachers during their online teaching practice.

Background of the Study

Teacher Education

The entire process of teacher education is changing very rapidly over the last decade of the years. To raise the quality of teacher education, various commissions, committee reports were formed from 19th Century to till today. The teacher education can be discussed broadly in two categories i.e. both pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher education. Report of The Education Commission 1964-66 pointed out the significance of teacher education is that a sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education. Investment in teacher education can yield very rich dividends because the financial resources required are small when measured against the resulting improvements in the education of millions.

Practice Teaching

Practice teaching constitutes a hub of multiple activities comprising the total programme of teacher education. It is interconnected with theoretical study, field work and practicum and a wide range of institutional experiences involving school students, student teachers and teacher educators. Practice teaching is considered as the pivotal component of the B.Ed. programme.

Practice teaching is a course or a programme in which the student trainees are posted to schools to teach the students subject areas of their specialization for a specified period. During this period the student teachers assume the position of normal subject teachers at the same time engage in all the lawful assignments given by the cooperating school authorities.

The teaching practice helps the prospective teachers to make a smooth transition from the student to a teacher. At the same time the teaching practice

assignment gives the teacher training institutions an opportunity to evaluate the students teaching capabilities. It is one of the most important components of the teacher training program. It is an opportunity for student teachers to put their theoretical studies into practice. There may be some inconsistencies between what has been learned in college or university and the actual situation in the classroom. The teaching practice exercise should help student teachers to integrate theory and practice. It is the responsibility of teacher education institutions to provide such learning experiences to student teachers that they may be able to identity, select and innovate organize such learning experiences which may develop competence in the student teachers to teach the course of their specialization on the one hand and recreational activities and social useful production work on the other hand. As teaching practice is an important component of teachers training program, considerable attention must be given to make it more effective and fruitful.

Objectives of Practice Teaching

- To enable the student teachers learn the art of teaching.
- To acquaint the student teachers with different approaches of teaching and communication techniques and help them to develop skills and competencies which may turn them to effective teachers.
- To develop an ability to organize the content according to respective level of teaching.
- To provide training in the process of evaluation its significance and techniques.
- To develop classroom management techniques for effective teaching and learning.
- To develop the ability to organize the content according to respective levels of teaching.

Problems faced in Field Teaching Practice

Most of the training institutions for primary and secondary teachers have remained isolated from the mainstream of the academic life of the University, as well as from the daily problems of the schools. The quality of training institutions remains, with a few expectations, either mediocre or poor. Competent staff are not attracted; vitality and realism are lacking in the curriculum and programme of work which continue to be largely traditional; and set patterns and rigid techniques are followed in practice-teaching, with a disagreed for present-day needs and objectives. A comprehensive programme of improvement is urgently needed in teacher education programme. In spite of all these problem one more pressing problem of the hour is the conduct of teaching practice online.

Review of Related Studies

Almendingen et. al. (2021) conducted a study on the Student's experiences with online teaching following covid-19 lockdown: A mixed methods explorative study. It was found that 75% of students reported that their life had become more difficult and 50% felt that learning outcomes would be harder to achieve due to the sudden shift to online education. Twelve weeks into the lockdown, the corresponding numbers were 57% and 71%, respectively. The most pressing concerns among students were a lack of social interaction, housing situations that were unfit for home office purposes, including insufficient data bandwidth, and an overall sense of reduced motivation and effort. The students collaborated well in digital groups but wanted smaller groups with students they knew rather than being randomly assigned to groups. Most students agreed that pre-recorded and streamed lectures, frequent virtual meetings and student response systems could improve learning outcomes in future digital courses.

Mahmood, Nasir & Iqbal, Zafar (2018) investigated the challenges faced by prospective teachers during teaching practice. The sample of the study comprised

34 prospective teachers who were trained in using student-centered pedagogies in teaching practice. Data analysis revealed that the major challenges included dealing with poor physical infrastructure, scarce and underused academic resources, inflexibility in classroom arrangement, the non-professional attitude of school administration, and trying out innovation without challenging the prevailing school norms.

Abongdia, Adu, & Foncha (2017) conducted a study on the Pre-service teachers' challenges during teaching practice in one university in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The study found the challenges encountered by pre-service teachers during teaching practice. This qualitative study adopts an interpretivist research paradigm. 67 files were purposively selected for analysis and discussion. It was discovered that a conducive environment, exploration of experiential knowledge, student centeredness, and teaching language as a social practice are the fundamental teaching philosophies. The study concluded that the student teachers were able to identify most of these challenges, which to the researchers is a good starting point for finding solutions.

Nurcan & Mustafa (2015) investigated the challenges of teaching preservice science teachers (PSTs) articulated within the context of their practice teaching in mentor schools. Six PSTs were interviewed at the end of their fourth year in science teacher education program. The constant comparative method was used to analyze their interview data. The results indicated that PSTs encountered five main challenges during their teaching practice. It is found that the PSTs were not allowed to make enough teaching practice in mentor schools due to mentor teachers' concerns about covering the curriculum and they do not have enough pedagogical content knowledge. Preservice science teachers also experienced problems with classroom assessment and classroom management due to lack of enough training. In terms of classroom management, they believed that they learned the theory but they lacked practice.

Yucel & Ceren (2014) conducted a study on 'Evaluation of Prospective Teachers and Practice Classroom Teachers Opinions of Problems Encountered in Practice Schools'. The data about the opinions of the prospective teachers and the practice classroom teachers were collected through the 'Interview form' developed by the researchers, and 'Practice Teacher Proficiency Scale' that was developed by Kiraz (2003) in order to find out the prospective teachers' views regarding the practice classroom teachers.

Jumani (2013) conducted a study entitled "Connections between Theory and Practice in Teacher Education". The purpose of the study was to determine the gaps and reason of less connection between theory and practice in teacher education programmes. Data were obtained through Focus Group Interview with 40 M.A. Education female students who completed their four months teaching practice in December 2011. Data revealed that student teachers are quite satisfied with their pedagogical preparation and find difference in theory and practice in teacher education institutions and practice schools in Pakistan. Data indicate that student teachers were not allowed by schools to implement their learnt teaching strategies.

Yesilyurt & Cetin (2012) conducted a study to find out the problems encountered by teacher candidates during teaching practice. The study was carried out using 'nested multiple cases design', which is a type of case study method. The study group in the study consists of 322 final year students who attend the teaching practice curriculum in their final year of training. The data which were obtained using semi-structured interview forms were analyzed by means of content analysis using NVivo 8 qualitative data analysis software. At the end of the research, the problems faced by teacher candidates were categorized in six main categories and sixty themes; and solutions suggested for these problems were categorized in six main categories and forty four themes.

Mtika (2011) conducted a study to focuses on a qualitative Case Study concerned with teaching practicum as a pivotal component of teacher education in Malawi.

Purposive Sampling was used to select participants. Data were collected through Semi-structured Interviews. The findings indicated that trainee teachers undergo varied and often challenging experiences during teaching practicum.

Arif (2010) conducted a study to find out the problems encountered by student-teachers during their practicum studies This study tries to scrutinize the potential problems student-teachers encounter during their practicum studies and suggest ways to cope with them. It is hypothesized that most of the problems take place due to the lack of mainly audio-visual materials, other supplementary materials needed, pronunciation, translation, reading, speaking, writing activities. Lastly, it is agreed that overcrowded classrooms and sitting arrangement impede the effectiveness of foreign language instruction.

Sukran (2010) conducted a study to determine teacher candidates' problems who attend teaching practice courses about teaching skills. A qualitative design was selected for this research study. The participants of this study were 40 pre-service primary education teachers. The problems that the student teachers in both the academic years experienced in the process of practice teaching were "planning, subject matter knowledge, using instructional materials, motivation, communication, and time management and behavior management skills".

Hussain and Mahmood (2010) conducted a study to evaluate the role of school based internship in professional development of prospective teachers and to find out the gaps between the practice teaching & internship. Two Questionnaires and one Interview Schedule were used as research tools, data were collected after a session of briefing the difference between practice teaching, and internship the data were collected and analyzed through mean scores, which were compared to draw the results and conclusion. The study revealed that extended school-based training-internship plays a central role in professional development of prospective teachers.

Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009) conducted a study to explore the experiences of student teachers in the Vaal University of Technology Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) during their 10 weeks' teaching practice in the Vaal area. A qualitative research approach was used in the study. Semi-structured Interviews with all student teachers were used to collect the data while Content Analysis was used to identify themes and analyze the data. It was found that teaching practice is very interesting because they were able to apply what they had studied and they enjoyed teaching because they were conversant with the subject content. It was also found that it was not easy to teach because the learners were not co-operative; they did not do assignments, were noisy and were not actively involved in classroom activities

Significance of the Study

Teaching is an exciting and rewarding activity but like other professions it is demanding. It is requires that its practitioners clearly understand what should be done to bring about the most desirable learning in the pupil and be highly proficient in the skills necessary to carry out these tasks. Professionally trained teacher can use different methods of teaching successfully. It is really a very difficult task and only a professionally qualified teacher can do this. We cannot expect all this from a teacher professionally unqualified. To provide professional education for teachers, teacher education institutions have been established almost all over the world. Teaching practice refers to the opportunity given to the trainee to develop and improve his / her professional practice in the context of the real classroom, usually under some form of guidance and supervision. Perry says that teaching practice refers to the period of time in which a student teacher gains firsthand experience in working with a particular group of children. (Perry: 1997, P/3). A number of terms such as the teaching practice, student teaching, field studies, infield experience, school based experience or internship are used to refer to this activity. Niak writes about teaching

practice as in practice the embryo teacher, under the direct and continuing supervision of experience master, begins to teach, to apply the theory learned into practice. (Niak: 1998, P/133). Due to the Covid pandemic lockdown there is shift from classroom teaching to online teaching. So the prospective teachers are in a position to carry out their practice teaching online. The study aims to find out the challenges faced by the prospective teachers during their online teaching practice. The study would reveal the problems faced by the students during online teaching practice. The results of the study will be useful to address the forthcoming problems of these budding teachers thereby help them make a smooth transition as effective teachers in schools.

Methodology

The project used descriptive survey method. Survey method was employed to collect data for the project. The prospective teachers who are the B.Ed. teacher trainees undergoing their teaching practice was the population for the research study. A questionnaire comprising of 25 questions were prepared through google form. The questionnaire has closed responses with options such as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The questionnaire had sufficient instructions for the sample and also assurance was provided for the confidentiality of the data they provided. The google form questionnaire was circulated among the prospective teachers after getting due permissions from their heads of the institutions. A few personal data was also collected from the sample. After getting the responses from the prospective teachers the data was tabulated and analyzed in the form of tables. On the basis of analysis of data, findings and conclusion were drawn and recommendations were made. Responses to each question were recorded and percentage of each response was calculated and presented in tabular form.

Results

S.No.	Item	Percentage of Responses				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I am not allowed to conduct regular online classes during the teaching practice.	5.7	29.4	19.4	27	18.5
2.	I have sufficient computer knowledge and IT skills to conduct online classes during the teaching practice.	26.4	54.7	15.1	2.3	1.5
3	It is difficult for me to take classes in online mode during teaching practice	8.5	27.4	31.1	25.9	7.1
4	It is hard for me to cope with the connectivity issues during the online teaching practice	13.7	42	28.3	14.2	1.8
5	I did not practice any teaching skills during the online teaching practice.	5.2	11.3	16.5	39.6	27.4
6	Preparing e-resources for the online classes are time consuming.	11.3	45.8	34	7.7	1.2

7	It is hard for me to motivate the students to listen to the class during online teaching practice	17	36.8	26.9	17.9	1.4
8	Writing lesson plans are meaningless for online teaching practice.	9.9	17.9	32.5	31.1	8.6
9	Training the students to understand the online protocol during online classes is very challenging.	10.4	50.5	33	5.2	0.9
10	Undergoing teaching practice online makes me feel nervous and frustrated.	7.4	24.1	30.7	35.4	2.4
11	I need more training in online educational tools to conduct online teaching practice.	9	28.3	36.8	22.2	3.7
12	I wish I should have had more training in preparing e-resources before online teaching practice	9.4	39.6	30.7	17.9	2.4
13	It is hard for me to adapt any digital	7.5	33.5	32.5	22.6	3.9

	teaching tools without adequate training.				
14	I am not satisfied with the way I have done the achievement test and other record works.	7.1	29.2	23.1	30.2	10.4
15	I should have training in more evaluation techniques for conducting online assessment of students.	2.9	35.8	36.3	17.5	7.5
16	I feel that I should be given more training on conducting interactive student presentations.	7.3	40.1	36.3	15.1	1.2
17	I did not get sufficient feedback on my teaching practices as it was conducted online.	9	31.6	34.9	19.3	5.2
18	My home environment is not suitable for conducting the online teaching practices smoothly.	12.7	26.9	25	27.4	8
19	It is hard for me to cope with the distractions from the family members during	9.9	30.7	30.2	18.9	10.4

	online teaching practice.					
20	I prefer conventional teaching practices than the online teaching practices.	19.8	39.6	37.3	2.5	0.8
21	The doubts regarding the teaching practices were not sufficiently addressed by the mentor teachers.	6.6	21.2	29.7	34	8.5
22	Preparing teaching aids and other learning resources was meaningless during online teaching practice.	8.5	20.8	27.8	34	9
23	Undergoing online teaching practice is boring.	8.5	20.3	28.8	32.1	10.4
24	I faced a lot of challenges in dealing with digital devices such as mobile phones, laptops, etc.,	17.9	35.4	26.4	17	3.3
25	It is difficult for me to cope with the unrelated workload imposed on us during online teaching practice.	9.9	34.9	32.5	19.3	3.4

Interpretation

From the above table it is inferred that

- 5.7% and 29.4% of prospective teachers strongly agreed and agreed that they were not allowed to conduct online classes during their teaching practice.
- 26.4% and 54.7% of prospective teachers have strongly agreed and agreed that they have sufficient computer knowledge and IT skills to conduct online classes during the teaching practice.
- 35.9% of prospective teachers have felt difficult to take classes in online mode during teaching practice and 33% of prospective teachers have not felt any difficulties to take online class during their teaching practice.
- 13.7% and 42% of prospective teachers have strongly agreed and agreed that it was hard for them to cope with the connectivity issues during the online teaching practice.
- 39.6% and 27.4% of prospective teachers have agreed that they have practiced teaching skills during their online teaching practice.
- 11.3% and 45.8% have strongly agreed and agreed that preparing e-resources for the online class were time consuming.
- 17% and 36.8% of prospective teachers have strongly agreed and agreed that it was hard for them to motivate the students to listen to the class during online teaching practice.
- 31.1% and 8.6% of prospective teachers have disagreed and strongly disagreed that the lesson plans were meaningless during their online teaching practice.
- 10.4% and 50.5% of prospective teachers felt challenging to train the students to understand the online protocol during online classes.
- 31.5% of prospective teachers have accepted that undergoing teaching practice online makes them feel nervous and frustrated and 37.8% have disagreed to this.

- 37.3% of prospective teachers agree that they need more training in online educational tools and 25.9% of prospective teachers feel contented with the training they have received with online educational tools.

Recommendations

In light of the study conducted the following recommendations were made:

- Provisions should be made for prospective teachers to conduct online classes during their teaching practice.
- Measures should be taken to enhance the confidence of prospective teachers to conduct online teaching practice.
- Government should take steps to strengthen the internet connectivity used by the education sector through necessary provisions.
- Prospective teachers should be helped to write lesson plans for online teaching practice.
- School students should be trained on using online digital platforms and follow online protocols.
- Training programs and orientation programmes on digital learning tools should be conducted for the prospective teachers before their teaching practice.

Conclusion

In the B.Ed. teacher training programme, the period of teaching practice is considered as very demanding, hectic and exhaustive. Yet the essence of teacher training lies in it. Conducting teaching practices online is very challenging. This study also found that the prospective teachers face many challenges when conducting their teaching practice in an online platform. Hence proper measures should be taken to improve the ICT skills of prospective teachers which could be a step to overcome the challenges faced by them during their online teaching practice.

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