



**Role of Cooperative Teachers in Teaching Practice:
Prospective Teachers' Perspective**

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Abstract:

The objectives of the study were, to identify the role of cooperative teachers in teaching practice according to the perspective of prospective teachers, with reference to lesson planning, professional support and provision of feedback. In order to achieve the objectives and answer the research questions quantitative research design was applied and the survey was carried out. Respondents of the study were selected from the prospective students of the Department of Education, International Islamic University Islamabad. A questionnaire was developed based on three constructs, which were; Lesson Planning, Professional Support and Feedback. Data were analyzed through the mean. Findings of the study showed that cooperative teachers provide more facilitation on professional support as compared to lesson planning and feedback. It was concluded that, course instructors and cooperative teachers both are key players in the professional development of pre-service teachers. It was recommended that regular interactive sessions may be organized between cooperative teachers and teacher educators. Training institutions may provide different incentives to the cooperative teachers.

Keywords: Prospective teachers, cooperating teachers, teaching practice, professional support, feedback, lesson planning

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important component of progress in today's world. But this progress cannot take place without the efforts of teachers. Therefore, teacher training becomes extremely important. In education sector, teachers have a significant role in the development of learner. For this purpose,

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teachers are provided with the particular knowledge, trainings, and skills. Teacher Education programs are specifically affiliated to equip and inculcate teaching skills in prospective teachers through teaching practices. Through quality teaching practice teacher education institutions can produce quality teachers. MuleInga (2020), stated that qualities in teacher training can be defined as, teachers developing qualities of teaching as life-long learners in their specific subject areas and learning teaching through commitment by reflecting upon their practice.

Teaching practice is a major component for aspiring prospective teachers to understand and apply for their role in actual classrooms. This challenging experience provides professional competence. Effective and efficient teaching practice helps prospective teachers to reduce the gap between theory and practice. Durosaro (2015), said that moral principles and essential components of any selected profession can only be learned through field practice. Aglazor and Obi (2016), formulated a framework for good teaching practice in Nigeria and Canada. The Framework indicated that initial professional training helps the prospective teachers in learning professional ethics, knowledge, expertise, classroom management skills, values and attitudes. Different Teacher Education programs in South Africa also provide the chance of teaching practice. States train their teachers according to their set professional standards and these indicators are reflected in the curriculum of prospective teachers.

In the early decades, training of teachers and teacher education were used in the same terms conversely, training is isolated from education in that training has limitations. While it deals with the possible instructions to perform the specific function to develop the functional knowledge and skills. Whereas teacher education can be defined as “the program of education in research and training of an individual to impart skills from pre-primary to higher education level” (Osler & Starkey, 2017). During the training period prospective teachers are equipped with different pedagogical knowledge, understanding and its application in actual classrooms.

Research studies in Pakistan, showed that effective teachers can only be produced through effective teacher training. Results of different research studies also mentioned that the teaching competencies of teachers during service highly depends on a multitude of factors including the type of training, ability of teaching, encouragement, experience gained, and many more (Kamran, 2021). In nation building quality teacher training plays a vital part and, hence, teachers must be educated from competent trainers. Farah et al. (2016), stated that the Government of Pakistan needs to provide support in the programs for teachers’ training. Ultimately it will be beneficial to improve the teacher training of the prospective teachers (Siddiqui, 2020).

Teaching practice is the most prominent component of teacher education across the world and in Pakistan. Prospective teachers work under the supervision and guidance of cooperative teachers during teaching practice in their placement schools. Research studies showed that, cooperative teachers revealed a significant impact on the experiences and practical learning of prospective teachers. Professional support, provision of effective feedback and lesson plan preparation of prospective teachers can significantly be enhanced by the expertise of cooperative teachers. So, it is important to identify the role of cooperative teachers regarding lesson planning, professional support and feedback through the perception of prospective teachers.

The purpose of this survey study was to identify the perceptions of prospective teachers about the role of cooperative teachers in placement schools. Prospective teachers are enrolled in teacher education programs to get equipped and trained with the professional ethics, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical skills. As, guidance in lesson planning, feedback and support in professional ethics is an effective approach for prospective teachers to reduce the gap between theory and practice. So, the study is designed to investigate the contribution of cooperative teachers in multiple aspects of the development of pre-service teachers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

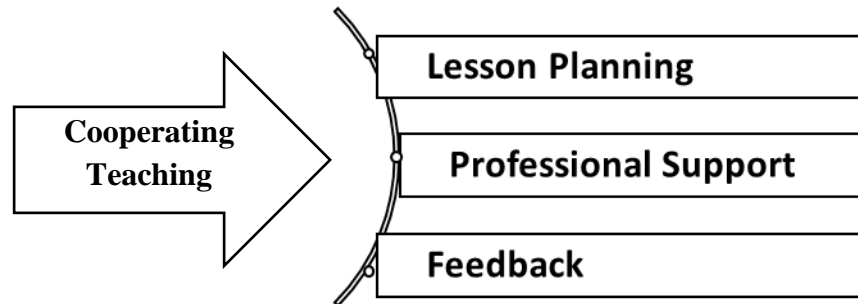


Figure 1.1: *Conceptual Framework*

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to identify the role of cooperative teachers in teaching practice according to the viewpoint of the prospective teachers.

- a) To identify the role of cooperative teachers in lesson planning by prospective teachers.
- b) To investigate the role of cooperative teachers in the provision of feedback to prospective teachers.
- c) To identify the professional support provided by the cooperative teachers to prospective teachers.

The study had the following research questions: To what extent is feedback from co-operative teachers effective for prospective teachers during teaching practice? How effective is feedback from cooperative teachers for prospective teachers during instructional practice? Why Professional support is significant for prospective teachers during teaching practice?

Delimitations

Prospective teachers who are enrolled in teaching practice for the semester fall 2021 at International Islamic University Islamabad.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The teaching profession is known as a leading profession in any society. Many institutions of teachers' education in the world are providing services for the development and enhancement of skills, knowledge, and competencies of pre-service teachers. There are many challenges for teachers and teacher education in countries of South Asia. Many innovative strategies have been developed for the effectiveness of professional trainings for teachers.

Professional Training of Pre-Service Teachers in Pakistan

Like other countries in the world, Pakistan is also offering a formal system of teacher education. Many universities and institutions of education are offering teacher education programs. They are offering many professional courses and HEC Islamabad invents syllabi for B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education), M.Ed. (Master of Education) and M.A. (Master of Arts) Education and similarly for the M.Ed, program to which pre-requisite is a bachelor's degree in education in Pakistan (Farah et al 2016).

Cooperating Teachers

In the placement school cooperative teachers work with prospective teachers to inculcate the basic skills of teaching in the classroom and managing various matters while teaching. Prospective teachers expect cooperation from cooperating teachers during teaching practice. Cooperating teachers are more engaged and remain classroom placeholders or supervisors in schools. Cooperating teacher helps the learner as a close coach for immediate actions and goal setting. Russell (2018), stated that, stimulating, motivating and boosting by the cooperating teachers means that the learner is devotedly working on practice through reflection and feedback.

Role of Cooperating Teachers

For effective training in teaching prospective teachers need to have a good demonstration. For this purposes cooperating teachers have a durable determination to assist in learning about academic related challenges. Cooperating teachers provide guidelines that how they have to manage various classrooms issues through open-mindedness and by opposing. They help to manage teaching aids in classrooms. The responsibilities of Cooperating teachers are, to supervise the prospective teacher and to help them in lesson planning. The provision of constructive feedback is also a major concern of the cooperating teachers. Familiarity with the previous background expertise of prospective teachers is also mandatory, to acquaint the prospective teachers with instructional aids and gradual development of skills in planning and evaluating the procedure of effective professional ethics.

Cooperative teachers work effectively in promoting a collegial environment for prospective teachers in placement school. Role of prospective teachers in internship phase work as main component in professional learning e.g,

1. Cooperating teacher aware the prospective teachers to engage in by professional manner.
2. Familiarize prospective teachers with the effective role of administration in uplifting the school.
3. Cooperating teachers also share the knowledge and strategies of low-risk in placement schools to maximize the earning of prospective teachers.
4. Develop feelings in prospective teachers to play their role as a contributing member during internship.
5. Cooperating teachers allow the prospective teachers to share the classroom problems of students.
6. Performance of prospective teachers also assessed by the cooperating teacher e.g, they provide the feedback on refinement of lesson plans and focused on on-going and final assessment.

Lesson Planning

In the placement schools, prospective teachers also learn aspects of effective lesson planning. It provides a clear road map for classroom instructions. Cooperating teachers assist them to follow the form of lesson planning according to learners' needs. Dack (2018), argued that lesson planning must reflect the cognitive demands of the learners. It leads to the professional growth of teachers as well by increasing competencies in teaching.

Professional Support

According to Karlsson, S., and Ryttberg, M. (2016), successful training in institutions depends upon the kind of professional support being provided. There must be the provision of a code of ethics according to the standards of the selected profession. It directly deals with the facilities provided by the other members of the same profession. Existing programs of professional development must reflect during practice (Siddiqui, 2020).

Feedback

Feedback by the teachers has a great impact on the learning of a student. Research studies show that, written feedback affects the understanding of prospective teachers to improve their performance, completion of various tasks and improved reflective thinking. Through Effective teacher evaluation quality of teaching practice can be improved (Borg, 2018). Participation of students in class depends upon the provision of feedback by the teachers, (Courtin, 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to investigate the role of cooperating teachers. Post-positivism philosophical approach was selected to achieve the objectives of the study. A quantitative research design was applied, and the survey was conducted to get the perspective of the respondents.

Population

All students who were enrolled in an internship (Teaching Practice and Administrative task) were the target population of study.

Table 1.1: Population

Program	Prospective Teachers
MA	43
BS	35
Total	78

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A simple random sampling technique was selected to get response from prospective teachers.

Sample Size

Table 1.2: Sample of the Study

Program	Prospective Teachers	Sample
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MA	43	38
BS	35	27
Total	78	65

Instrumentation

A self-developed closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. All the statements were relevant to the objectives of the study. The instrument was used after the finalization of experts' suggestions. Indicators of the self-developed questionnaire were:

- Planning
- Feedback
- Professional Support

Table 3.1

Reliability of Questionnaire

No of Statements	Chronbach's Alpha
15	0.790

The above table shows that the reliability of items under all constructs was, .790. It means the tool was reliable to administer.

Table 3.2

Mean Values

	N	Mean	Remarks
Lesson Plan	52	18.63	Sometimes
Professional Support	54	21.03	Commonly
Feedback	52	19.59	Sometimes

Table 3.2 shows that cooperative teachers help prospective teachers in lesson planning, managing lessons in the classroom and daily assessment, the mean score is 18.63. Professional Support t mean score was 21.03, which shows that cooperative teachers provide guidance in the classroom to deal with behavioral problems of students and provide opportunities to develop a professional attitude. The mean score on feedback was (19.59) which shows that cooperative teachers provide prospective teachers guidelines to cope with problems in the classroom and also provide feedback on prioritizing classroom goals and maintaining necessary students' records.

Data Collection

Researcher collected the data by administering the tool. The questionnaire was distributed among sixty-five prospective teachers but could receive back fifty-four questionnaires. So, the response rate was 83%.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were applied to analyze the data. For this research study mean was applied to know the perspectives of prospective teachers.

FINDINGS

It was found that cooperative teachers sometimes provide help to prospective teachers in planning and conducting lessons in the classroom ($m=18.63$). Opportunities to work with cooperating teachers, was found to be very beneficial professionally as prospective teachers are more likely to notice more suitable dimensions of classroom events and may deepen their abilities to notice, ask about and reflect on less observable dimensions of teaching ($m=21.03$). It was found that cooperative teachers provide constructive feedback to pre-service teachers by evaluating their performance and highlighting the areas which required more focus (19.59).

DISCUSSION

The importance of prospective teaching is well documented in the literature. This pre-service teaching experience is generally the culminating activity of the teacher's training program, as it integrates theory and practice to support the attainment of knowledge, skill and disposition. Many researchers have highlighted the relationship between prospective teachers and cooperative teachers. The most important role of cooperative teachers is a mentor of prospective teachers in the classroom. Mentoring the prospective teachers in every step of teaching is necessary, whether it is planning a lesson or arranging activities or identification, achievement or evolution of class and lesson objectives. Cooperative teachers help pre-service teachers in planning lesson, arranging suitable activities and guiding to prioritizing aims/objectives of class (Henry & Weber, 2016). Results of the study also mentioned that, cooperating teachers provide guidelines to manage the classroom content to prospective teachers and give clear instructions regularly. They, demonstrate to prospective teachers about effective questioning in the classroom.

According to Scherff and Singer (2016), prospective teachers seek emotional support and task assistance from cooperative teachers. Cooperative teachers serve several roles in the prospective teacher teaching experience: as the provider of feedback, gatekeeper of the profession, modeler of the practices, supporter of reflection, purveyor of context and an advocate of practical and gleaner of knowledge. Cooperating teachers guide prospective teachers in practical teaching matters, such as necessary student' records maintained in the classroom, safety, due process and when it is necessary to obtain approval from the administration (Rozelle & Wilson, 2017).

The results of this study provide further confirmation to the current core, cooperative teachers provide a positive contribution to the professional development of prospective teachers with resources and materials such as access to teaching files, copies of textbooks and assessments. According to the views of prospective teachers, cooperating teachers help them in providing a safe and conducive environment for effective teaching and managing various problems and conflicts among students. Furthermore, cooperating teachers also assist to develop the motivation to work in their placement schools. They enhanced their communication skills by attending to various parents on different issues. Constructive feedback is significant in the learning of prospective teachers which helps to reduce weaknesses. According to the study, prospective teachers get

feedback on their assigned tasks which ultimately helps them to learn skills of keeping class records and improve skills of reflective thinking.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the data concluded that course instructors and cooperating teachers, both are key players in the professional development of pre-service teachers. Cooperating teachers are an important extension of the teacher's education program as the prospective teacher is a novice in the field of teaching and a cooperative teacher is an instructor and model. The study concluded that, cooperative teachers are helpful in the classroom regarding teaching and planning activities. Clinical practical experience in the classroom is essential for the development of competencies. The cooperative teacher sometimes concluded as helpful and sometimes not, while it is clear that half of the prospective teachers' perception was good and became more like their cooperating teachers. Cooperating teachers are willing to provide all information regarding lesson planning and classroom instructions Furthermore, some were influenced by their cooperating teachers and some were not. The study has a moderate response. According to some prospective teachers, their cooperative teachers were helpful, generous and fully involved which enhanced their professional experience and some responses were different.

Recommendations

It is recommended that regular meetings between cooperative teachers and teacher educators may be organized. University supervisors may visit very often to strengthen cooperation with the placement school and university and prospective teachers and cooperative teachers. Cooperative teachers may be provided with different incentives during teaching practice. Supervisors' responsibilities may be broadened so that, it involves briefings to the cooperative teacher about the content of the training course so that the trainer-teacher meetings can become more regular and informative.

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