

*An Analytical Study of the Challenges Faced by Cooperative Teachers during the Practicum Process in Sindh Province*

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## An Analytical Study of the Challenges Faced by Cooperative Teachers during the Practicum Process in Sindh Province

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### **Abstract**

One of the most important jobs that an educational institution ensures, is to guide its students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, skills and attitude through learning experiences. The most crucial component of every educational program is the teacher. At every level, the primary person in charge of carrying out the educational process is the teacher. This demonstrates how crucial it is to find teacher preparation in order to ensure a State's future. The significance of proficient educators in the state's educational system cannot be overstated (Abdullah, et, al,2020).

**Methodology:** The study was descriptive in nature with qualitative approach, in which purposive sampling of the students was undertaken from the Public sector institutions, and Universities of Sindh Province. After cleaning data 13 samples were finalized and used for data collection through interview.

**Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data in this research study.

**Findings:** The analysis results demonstrate a huge communication gap among the cooperating teachers and others that creates hurdle to carry on the program efficiently. Along with this the study highlights that there is a prodigious need of

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bridge to be built that may comfort to guide the subject properly. Cooperation and coordination are known as the great pillars to support and maintain institutional matters. However, here it lacks this and proves to create many collaborative issues. This research study disclosed that the school heads are reluctant to be aware of the importance of practicum and were loath to welcome the prospective teachers despite of motivation given by the practicum coordinators some of them were not prepared to accept the prospective teachers, It is also found that the practicum in fact is of great significance but it is undervalued by the cooperating teachers. This may be due to the lack of incentives offered to the cooperating teachers, they viewed practicum as wastage of time along with this they show mistrust on the supervisors because cooperating teachers feel undue interference in their official work and feel fear to be reported about their performance to their authorities and concerned departments.

**Keywords:** Cooperative Teachers, Practicum Process, Students, Institutions

### **INTRODUCTION**

No country can advance the caliber of its educational system, which is largely reliant on the caliber of its educational experts/teachers in order to do their jobs effectively. teachers need to be well equipped with the best resources both during and after their training, including teaching methods and content knowledge, skills and abilities. If the idea of globalization were to be taken into consideration, teaching would have to be recognized with any other etiquette as, it would need to undergo rigorous training, acquire new knowledge and skills, and be professionally registered under a global council of unified teacher registration body in order to facilitate teachers' easy mobility across the national borders. One of the most significant parts of a teacher preparation program is the teaching practice, which gives student teachers the teaching skills they need for their future careers. This activity is referred by a number of terms, including teaching practice, field studies, infield experiences, school-based experience, or internship, states Naik (1998). When it comes to teaching, Naik describes how the novice teacher first tries to put the theory they have learned into practice while being closely supervised by an experienced teacher (Naik, 1998).

A practicum is a special kind of education that gives students a chance to examine material from the classroom and apply it to the professional abilities needed to become teachers. The definition of practicum in both British and global dictionaries is A practical section of a course of study (World English and British Dictionary, 2015). To connect theory and practice in a real-world classroom setting is known as practicum. It's a procedure that involves doing things that highlight how theory may be used practically, like giving students real-world experience working in a sector they are studying.

The concept of internship as it is the responsibility of teacher education institutions to provide such learning experiences to student teachers that they may be able to identify, select, innovate and organize such learning experiences which may develop competence in the student teachers to teach the course of their specialization on the one hand and the games, recreational activities and socially useful productive work on the other hand," says Khan (1993) in this regard student instructors can benefit greatly from an internship program in teaching rather than a standard teaching practice program in the development of these ideas (Khan, 1993). Work experience are a new experience in the teaching profession that allow trainees to observe the entire work of the school and to actively participate in all professional

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activities of a teacher both in and out of the classroom (Khan, 1993).

The USAID Teacher Education project (2008-13) in collaboration with the higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Government of Pakistan impart new knowledge and skills about teaching. In this regard 04-year Bachelor's degree in Education and two years Associate degree in Education (ADE) was introduced. The minimum qualification requirement of ADE program is intermediate. Through this course students not only gain new knowledge and insight about teacher education course but also, they improve their teaching skills through practicum traditionally called instructional experiences. Practicum is a crucial constituent of this newly introduced program. The practicum in ADE program is 3 credit courses included in both 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester syllabus. The total number of hours required in a semester for this course is 3 credit × 3 hours × 16 weeks equals 144 hours. It is recommended that prospective teachers spend around 120 hours in the classroom in both 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester. According to practicum syllabus provided by USAID teacher education project, this course is described as, Prospective elementary grade teachers should receive carefully planned and supervised field experiences in all areas of the basic curriculum during their practicum in Semesters 3 and 4. They ought to be given the chance to work with students in two different grade levels, one in an upper school classroom and the other in a lower school classroom. They ought to work with kids who have a range of abilities and backgrounds. The practicum ought to be designed so that aspiring teachers are given progressively more responsibility in every classroom. (Supervisor Handbook, USAID Teacher Education Project, semester 4, 2012). It goes on to say that, field work should be accompanied by a practicum seminar to assist aspiring teachers in connecting the pre-service programs to real-world applications. The seminar should provide an opportunity to clarify and revise their teaching goals and their beliefs about a wide range of educational issues (Supervisor Handbook, semester 4, 2012 USAID, Teacher Education Project).

Practicum experiences are directed by three grave contributors or triad:

- a) Prospective Teacher
- b) Cooperative Teacher
- c) College / University Supervisor

As discussed earlier about the triad members involved in practicum process that each member of the triad performs a particular and important role to make the practicum effective and successful. The main role of cooperative teacher will be facilitating, providing guidance and feedback to student teacher in their daily work in the co-operating school which enhances the practical skills of aspirant teacher.

Therefore, the purpose of this research study is to explore the challenges faced by cooperative teachers who are dealing with prospective teachers. This study is delimited to collaborative schools of Mirpurkhas, Mithi, Hyderabad, Thatta and Badin.

### **Objectives**

To evaluate the challenges faced by Cooperative Teachers during practicum process.

To diagnose the causes of these Challenges faced by the Cooperative Teachers in the process of Practicum.

To enlist recommendation to solve the problems faced by the Cooperative Teachers in the process of Practicum.

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### Research Questions

On what extent Cooperative Teachers face the challenges during Practicum Process?

What are the causes of these Challenges faced by the Cooperative Teachers in the Practicum Process?

### 1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of current research study is descriptive survey type with qualitative approach. The data collected through face to face open ended interview schedule. The researcher himself collected the data. Before the collection of data, it was validated through pilot study. After collection of data the interview schedule was converted into various themes and thematic analysis was undertaken.

**Table Showing the population of the study**

S.NO:	INSTITUTION	NO: OF COOPERATING TEACHERS
01	GECE Badin	15
02	Faculty of Education	15
03	GECE Hyderabad(M)	12
04	GECE Hyderabad (W)	17
05	GECE Mirpurkhas (M)	20
06	GECE Mirpurkhas (F)	20
07	GECE Mithi	14
08	GECE Thatta(M/W)	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>127</b>

The population of study was  $n = 127$  it includes the cooperative teachers of various districts mentioned earlier. The Sample of study was 10% of the total population  $n = 13$ . In the present study the data were collected with the help of Face to face interview from cooperating teachers. The semi structured interview schedule contained 10 questions. Whereas, this face to face interview was taken from 13 cooperative teachers among them 02 were on leave. This interview was also analyzed under the following themes, Willingness as cooperative teacher to work, Awareness about practicum process, Problems during practicum process, their solutions and future perspective.

### Ethical Considerations

The targeted population was informed and briefed in advance that there is no any harm in giving real opinion through the interview protocol. Therefore, the respondents were not doubtful while responding during the administration of interview protocol. Meanwhile the head teachers of schools were also informed and taken in confidence. At the same time the certificate of permission from the research supervisor was also produced to avoid any uncertainty in this regard. Besides this, it was determined that the findings of this study

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would reveal the reality about whatever the researcher has discovered, how much harsh it may be, has been undoubtedly explained in the study. **Analysis and Interpretation of data**  
The analysis of data collected through interviews were thematically analyzed.

### **Analysis and Findings of the Qualitative Data for Cooperative Teachers**

#### **Theme 01 Willingness as Cooperative Teachers to work**

60% respondents showed their keen interest to become the cooperative teachers.

25% respondents were reluctant to carry on the work as cooperative teachers they feel overburdened and could not manage properly the normal routine of school work.

15% did not show any interest in this regard but because of managerial pressure they are compelled to perform this task.

#### **Theme 02 Awareness about Practicum Process**

Majority of 75% the cooperative teachers were acquainted with practicum process through trainings arranged by USAID, triad meetings and continuous interaction with supervisors and coordinator.

Rest of 25% were less motivated from all above from all above and 07% respondents did not mention any reason.

#### **Theme 03 Problems and Issues during Practicum Process**

Almost all the respondents cried for having lots of problems during the practicum process. Among them 75% respondents have mentioned problems with solutions where as 25% were pessimistic regarding the solution of problems.

#### **Theme 04 Future Perspective**

All the respondents have given suggestions for the improvement of the practicum process. These were mentioned in recommendations.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher education program is having great significance in education system because the future of the society mainly depends on the teachers and their professional skills. That's why it is worldwide recognized that teachers should be given great importance in the improvement of education process. So, quality of teachers depends on the effective teacher education program. It is a fact that teachers' skills have a profound impact on the achievement of students. Learning is not just memorizing the content knowledge and information but also applying them in working environment and practical life. Therefore, practice in teaching practicum is an essential part of successful teaching program through which aspirant teacher learns professional skills necessary for teaching profession. In practicum there are three main stake holders called triad members of practicum namely: Supervisor, cooperative teacher, and prospective teacher. The effective and successful practicum is based on the strong collaboration of triad members. The present research study aimed to find out Challenges Faced by Cooperative Teachers during the Practicum Process. It was descriptive survey type study; the data were collected through qualitative method and analyzed as per requirement. On the basis of analysis and interpretation of data findings were made. The study concluded that there was dearth of proper and strong collaboration among triad members of practicum. It is revealed that due to collaborative break the following issues occur that make the practicum process complicated and non-effective.

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1. Communication gap
2. Absence of supervision and guidance
3. Lack of cooperation and coordination
4. No value or undervalue the practicum
5. Mistrust of Cooperating Teachers on the supervisors and Prospective Teachers.

This research study demonstrates great communication gap among the cooperating teachers and other triad that creates hurdles to carry on the program efficiently. Along with this the study highlights that there is a great need of bridge to be built that may comfort the triads to guide the subject properly. Cooperation and coordination are known as the great pillars to support and maintain collaboration. But here the triads lack this, owing that many collaborative issues arise. This research study disclosed that the school head are not well aware of the importance of practicum and were reluctant to welcome the prospective teacher's despite of motivation given by the practicum coordinators some of them were not prepared to accept the prospective teachers. It is also found that the practicum in fact is of a great significance but it is undervaluing by the cooperating teachers. Therefore, the required results are not obtained on such extent, mainly this issue occurs on the part of cooperating teachers. This is also due to the lack of incentives offered to the cooperating teachers, they viewed practicum as wastage of time and along with this they show mistrust on the supervisors because cooperating teachers feel undue interference in their official work and feel fear to be reported about their performance to their authorities and concerned departments.

**Recommendations:**

The following are the suggestions that will minimize the challenges faced by the triad members particularly pertaining to the collaboration in the practicum process.

- ✓ The practicum coordinator is a person in the process of practicum who maintains the strong collaboration among triad members. So, this important responsibility may be handed over to a professional and responsible person.
- ✓ The issue of collaboration arises due to the lack of proper planning in the practicum process. If the planning in this connection is strongly made the issues would automatically diminish.
- ✓ Well-built practicum planning may be based on the development of two work plans one for placement of prospective teachers in cooperative schools and another for practicum activities pertaining to prescribed tasks, dateline for completing the activities, mentioning that task will be completed individually or in group. It is also described in work plan that who will provide the feedback on the activities to the prospective teachers? The example of such work plans may be referred in the appendices 'D' and 'E'. It is also suggested that these plans may be constructed with consent of cooperating schools and administration.
- ✓ Selection of cooperative schools and getting permission to work as cooperative school is another issue. In this regard there may be a strong collaboration between education department and teacher education institutions. Provincial Government should make legislation in this connection and make sure that the schools and district administration cooperate with teacher education institutions. Such step will lessen the unnecessary fear of school teachers to work as cooperative teacher. In this connection the heads of schools should

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be directed by the higher authorities to include the practicum work in the workload weightage of selected cooperative teachers, so that they may feel ease and comfort.

✓ Fortunately, in Sindh all teacher education institutions have been supported with material provided by USAID Teacher Education Project in the form of Practicum course guides and hand books etc. So, it is recommended that teacher education institutions should arrange mini-trainings for cooperative teachers and supervisors to discuss the process and review the complete handbook and course guide before starting the practicum. It is also suggested that all the prescribed proforma included in the practicum guide should be practiced by the supervisors and cooperative teachers in their trainings. No doubt, providing constructive feedback is a skill and art in any field but unfortunately it is observed that in practicum process the supervisors and cooperative teachers lack this art, owing this they avoid to work with cooperative teachers resulting how to give the constructive feedback. It should be the part of this training which minimize the communication gap among the triad.

✓ Effective practicum requires description of role and responsibilities of triad members so, it is also suggested that during the training sessions the role and responsibilities of triad members should be shared and distributed the same in black and white to all the concerns. This will help completely to overcome the conflicts among the triad members and at the same time it will boost the lasting association among them.

✓ The prescribed support material should be provided to cooperating teachers some days before the start of practicum process for ready reference. This step will enable cooperative teachers to prepare themselves in advance which will uplift confidence.

✓ Triad meeting is an essential component of practicum process so the suggested triad meetings should certainly be conducted in cooperative schools and issues of Cooperating teachers particularly and other triad members generally may be discussed and resolved in such meetings that enhance the trust and confidence and cooperation among cooperating teachers.

✓ For the proper and clear understanding of support material and handbooks it is recommended to translate the same in regional and national languages.

✓ It is also suggested that at the end of practicum process the teacher training institutions should send appreciation letters to cooperative schools and the cooperative teachers and on the other hand the teacher training institutes may invite all the cooperative teachers and acknowledge their cooperation and coordination. Besides this they should also be invited time to time in co-curricular activities of their institutions. Such gatherings will certainly pave the path for forthcoming sessions.

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