



ISSUES OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN MASTER OF ENGLISH EDUCATION: SUPERVISORS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This study analyse on the issues of teaching practice through the lenses of internal supervisors. It is an attempt to explore whether the pre-service teachers were provided with adequate comments and feedbacks from their supervisors during on-campus and off-campus activities; whether the assigned tasks were appropriate for them and what challenges of teaching practice existed in Master of English Education. Phenomenological research design was adopted to carry out this study. Ten English teachers were selected non-randomly from constituent and affiliated colleges of Tribhuvan University as a sample to elicit data to address the research questions of this study. The findings of this study showed that there were lack of proper feedbacks and comments both from their peers and supervisors; teaching practice has been taken as rituals; the pre-service teachers could be engaged professionally through proper management of teaching practice; the main root causes of being ineffective of teaching practice were lack of proper exposure of item construction and analysis, inadequate amount of remuneration to supervisors. It is concluded that the course of teaching practice under the Faculty of Education should be revamped and revisited in order to produce competent efficient and professional English teachers in both content and pedagogical techniques.

Keywords: teaching practice - pre-service teacher - feedbacks - comments - rituals - prospective teacher

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prestigious occupations in the world is teaching. Since teachers provide their students with success to the world's knowledge, information, experience and erudition, teachers are regarded as the pillar

of any educational system (Nisha 2009). Since producing teachers of the highest caliber is every nation's primary objective for teacher education, deliberate efforts are required to have an impact on the field's standard. It was believed that teaching is an art and best teachers cannot be produced and made; but they are born. However, it is the age of post-modern of science and information communication technology (ICT) which influences the teacher education so teaching is a science; but not an art. Teachers can be made more competent and efficient through the exposure of knowledge, skills of ICT and imparting training. Furthermore, it is also believed that teaching is a profession but not a trade. Teaching profession is based on principles of education, child psychology, techniques, methods and approaches of teaching and laws of learning. This study will be a cornerstone for the teachers and students of the Faculty of Education (FoE). The findings of this study will be very invaluable for the pedagogues, professional teachers, and researchers.

Teacher is a changing agent; but not a mere transmitter of knowledge and culture to the students; but to mould the individual to become a responsible and dutiful citizen. The existing teacher education system is not up-to-date to produce competent and resourceful teachers at Tribhuvan University. Graham and Pande argue (1977) that we have a very long history of teacher education which was founded approximately 66 years ago in 1956 as college education prior to the inception of Tribhuvan University. A few teachers came to Nepal from Europe and India to teach the children of the affluent family (Graham & Pande 1977). The teacher training programme is envisaged to bring about certain changes in the behavior patterns of trainees during the teacher training. To bring the stipulated changes in the behaviors of the trainees, the Government of Nepal should invest a considerable amount of money in the modification of the curricula, policies and teaching materials, allowances of tutors and digitalization of the library. The teacher training has to be provided to pre-service and in-service teachers for their teacher professional development (TPD). Teacher training is usually provided to pre-service teachers through the teaching practice via modes of on-campus and off-campus programmes. Teacher education incorporates teacher training, such as teaching practice which has to be conducted rigorously. There should be very effective programs in teaching practice since it is a preliminary teacher training programme of pre-service teachers in their long teaching careers.

Teaching as a profession plays a pivotal role in the society to lay the foundation for preparing the individuals for all other profession. Since teacher is a catalyst agent of change in the society, the university should offer adequate and effective teacher training to pre-service teachers through the teacher education programme. There are various factors that influence teachers' qualities and professional competences, such as TPD, curricula, teaching and learning materials, extra-curricular activities, infrastructures, ELT conferences, human resources, teaching practice, political ideology and intervention, and ICT skills. Among them, the teaching practice is one of the most important factors which plays a vital role to enhance the initial professional competences and professionalism of pre-service teachers during the teacher education programme. Teaching practice has been prescribed as a compulsory practical subject in the final semester of M.Ed. at Tribhuvan University. It is a type of internship like engineering, medicine and nursing in the institutions of Engineering and medicine respectively. It is usually conducted at the end of fourth semester of M.Ed. and having completed the theoretical specialized subjects in the teacher development programme at Tribhuvan University

Teaching practice has been regarded as an internship during the fourth semester of M.Ed. The course of teaching practice has been executed as micro teaching, peer teaching and real teaching as on-campus and off-campus activities. Finally, the pre-service teachers are sent for two weeks as off-campus activities in the schools and colleges on the basis of their first preference of schools and colleges. During the off-campus programme, they have to conduct action research and construct a model of questions based on the syllabus of the particular subjects which they have taught. Moreover, the constructed objective and subjective questions should be executed to the students whom they have taught based on the specification grid introduced by National Examination Board (NEB) and Tribhuvan University. They should analyze and interpret the appropriacy and validity of the subjective and objective items based on the answers of students. Eventually, they have to prepare the whole report as a final converged report. However, these final converged reports, such as micro-teaching lesson plan, peer-teaching lesson plans, teaching materials, peer-teaching evaluation forms, analysis and interpretation of action research, analysis and interpretation of subjective and objective items and final lesson plan should be submitted to external examiner and internal supervisors.

As a tutor, reflecting my experiences, I have been participating as an internal supervisor for more than two decades in the teaching practice programme of university campus as an internal and external examiner of FOE. The pre-service teachers do not comfortably carry out all of the stipulated requirement tasks offered by the FoE which have been assigned to accomplish mandatorily. The action research is one of the assigned component tasks in the teaching practice in M.Ed. at University Campus, Tribhuvan University. However, FOE of Tribhuvan University, has made action research as one of the criteria to accomplish teaching practice. This action research has not been carried out scientifically during off-campus period of teaching practice. There have been a lot of controversial issues of action research and item analysis during off-campus. All of the required assigned tasks of teaching practice of M.Ed. are regarded as rituals by the pre-service teachers which can be the main obstacles for them to be different from non-M.Ed. counterparts in their professional careers. More importantly, the feedbacks and comments from the internal supervisors are essential to develop the competency of pre-service teachers during off-campus. My following queries were attempted to address in this study:

- i) What are the challenges of teaching practice of M.Ed. at Tribhuvan University?
- ii) Do the pre-service teachers get adequate comments and feedbacks on every aspect from the internal supervisors? How these comments and feedback help them in their performance.
- iii) Are all assigned requirements adequate for the pre-service teachers to be competent and trained ? Why are such assignments important to enhance performative skills ?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this study, theoretical and empirical reviews of literature regarding the teaching practice from home to abroad are incorporated in section. The theoretical and empirical reviews of literature on teaching practice are included in this chapter.

Historical traces of teacher education in Nepal

His Majesty's Government of Nepal formed Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) by appointing 46 (forty six) members in 1954 (Graham & Pande 1977). NNEPC recommended the immediate inception of a short-term teacher training programme in Nepal

in 1954 since there was no any formal teacher education institution in Nepal to train the primary, basic, and secondary levels teachers. Furthermore, NNEPC also recommended establishing a college of Education in 1954. As a result, the college of Education was established in 1957. College of Education started adult education programme through radio in 1958. Then, the College of Education was transformed into Central Department of Education under Faculty of Education at Tribhuvan University.

His Majesty's Government of Nepal inaugurated the National Teacher Training Centre (NTTC) in Kathmandu, in 1954. NTTC started to offer teacher training to the thousands of Nepali educators in Kathmandu and in other parts of the country by sending the mobile teams across the country. A thousand of teachers of primary, lower and secondary level teachers of all subjects were trained by 1956. If we traced the history of teacher education in Nepal, the basic teacher training program was initiated in 1947. The Basic Teaching Training Program was Nepal's first effort towards any kind of formal training programme for teachers. The Basic Teacher Training Program was the imitation of the Basic Education programme in India which was based on the Gandhian philosophy of education for self-support. According to Graham and Pande (1977), the program placed a strong emphasis on different crafts that one can do to take care of one's own needs, including spinning and weaving for clothing, woodworking, bricklaying, and masonry for shelter, and agriculture for food. The Basic Teacher Training Programme could be flourished successfully in Nepal; however, it died after 5 years of its establishment.

National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) was established in 1993 under Ministry of Education. Nepal formally started providing training to in-service teachers from primary to secondary levels. NCED has envisioned offering teacher training for the TPD of all in-service teachers of all subjects across the country (Pangeni 2016). Teacher training is the basic foundation for TPD which is inevitable for teachers to transform education. TPD is a lifelong process through which teachers keep growing for professionally competent and efficient teachers.

Teaching practice

Practicum is a must to accomplish professional training. According to Gebhard (2009 as cited in Rana 2014), teaching practice stands for practicum, field experience, apprenticeship, practical experience and internship. No teacher education is complete without teaching practice. It

is an initial phase of teacher training to become professionally competent teachers pedagogically. Teaching practice is a significant component of pre-service teachers in teacher education system. Pokhrel and Behera (2016) argued history demonstrates that a number of teachers progress from their initial stages to become better and then excellent teachers. Teaching practice is very remarkable for the pre-service teachers for their teaching careers. It is a course or module designed to enable pre-service teachers to the ELT theoretical knowledge in the actual classroom setting (Abdullah & Mirza 2020). Teacher training programme is mandatory for developing skills and professional competence for pre-service teachers. There is marriage between theory and practice in 2 weeks teaching practice of pre-service teachers of M.Ed. curricula. In other words, the pre-service teachers employ the ELT theories in the classroom practically during the teaching practice of 2 weeks.

The novice teachers apply theoretical ELT knowledge in the real classroom practically while conducting teaching practice. The pre-service teachers are innocent and ignorant concerning the culture of schools, rules and regulation of schools and colleges so they are expected to comply all of the rules and regulations of schools and colleges rigidly during the teaching practice. Furthermore, they are expected to develop the strategies for teacher professional development (TPD) during the teaching practice of on-campus and off-campus programmes. Micro teaching is one of the ranges of techniques for developing experiential knowledge professional action in on-campus activities (Wallace, 2010). They get engaged extensively in the teaching phenomena under the guidance of internal supervisor for 30 days. In this regard, Laughran (2002) asserted that the pre-service teachers learn to use appropriate teaching techniques, methods, approaches, classroom management, and maintaining relationships between teacher and students through the experience for 2 weeks during real teaching at schools and colleges. This is the formally golden opportunities for them to acquire professional skills and competences. Husu, Toom and Partrikainen (2015) argued we refer to the phase of teacher reflection that is complementary to student teaching and serves to effectively challenge and support student teacher as they gain knowledge from their classroom experiences. There is significant role of pre-service teachers' reflection during teaching practice. Their reflective discussions in the class help them develop their teaching skills and classroom control. There are six forms of reflection like introspection, association, integration, validation, appropriation and transformation (Husu, Toom & Prikainen 2008).

The period of 2 weeks of teaching practice for the pre-service teachers help establish the huge base for their professional careers. The novice teachers are expected to acquire the professional knowledge and skills during this period.

Practice teaching is regarded as a tool of learning to teach since it promotes the development of teaching experience. Moreover, teaching practice helps the pre-service teachers prepare for the real world of work (Msangya, Mkoma & Yihuan 2016). The teaching practice programme of the university should be a well-designed which aims at producing academically qualified, professionally skilled and attitudinally and ethically committed to their profession (Msangya, Mkoma & Yihuan 2016). In order to make classroom learning effective, teachers must be well-trained and enable to take up their professional responsibility. The main objective of teaching practice is to develop skillful, knowledgeable, and reflective practice (Bell, 2004).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Phenomenological research design was used to accomplish this study. The phenomenological research design is one of the research designs of qualitative research approach. According to Welman and Kruger (1999) the goal of phenomenology is to comprehend social and psychological phenomena from the viewpoints of those who are experiencing them. According to Marshall and Rossman (2010), there should be open or semi-structured interview that allow the researchers to address the phenomenon profoundly, providing a space of aperture for the informants to express their experiences in detail, approaching reality as faithfully as possible. In doing so, thematic network analysis technique was adopted to generate the global themes from basic and organizing themes by linking with existing relevant literature while analyzing the collected data from the informants. The data were collected from those informants who shared their own experiences in this study. All of the English teachers who were participated in teaching practice as internal supervisors were the population of this study. Is elected 10 English teachers from 5 constituent and 5 affiliated colleges of Tribhuvan University as a sample through purposive non-random sampling procedure. One English teacher was selected at least one teacher from each college. I employed in-depth interview as a research tool to teachers to elicit the data from 10 teachers. In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the respondents were entitled pseudo name as R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, and R10.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are 5 global themes out the 20 basic and organizing themes which were developed from the data in this study. The global themes were analyzed and discussed with the help of verbatim of respondents as follows: The global themes were developed out of basic and organized themes to make the verbatim of the respondents more specific

Lack of proper feedbacks and comments from peers and supervisors

Teaching practice has been prescribed as a compulsory practicum subject carrying with 3 credits in the fourth semester in M.Ed. English curriculum at Tribhuvan University. The pre-service teachers were to be provided constructive feedbacks and comments by their internal supervisors and peers in course of conducting teaching practice. In this regard, one of the internal supervisors from English education asserted that

I observed and supervised the classes of pre-service teachers during micro teaching, peer teaching and real teaching programme for more than 3 months. I frequently asked them to provide constructive feedbacks to their peers regarding using teaching materials, the way of delivery skills, preparation of the particular topic, and techniques of teaching in the class; however, most of them were passive and silent in the class.

There is no culture of giving and taking comments and feedbacks from their peers while conducting teaching practice in micro and peer teaching. They were not learning to manage classroom by adopting learner-centered techniques in the language classroom. I think if they developed the culture of taking and giving feedbacks and comments to each other among peers, they would develop useful teachability and employability skills during the teaching practice (Kadel 2021). There should be consistency while giving feedbacks and comments regarding format of lesson plan and assigned other tasks (Gautam 2010). In this regard, the R3 claimed that

in my observation, I found that there was no any productive and constructive comments and feedback even from their internal supervisors during micro teaching, peer teaching and real teaching period to the pre-service teachers. In my opinion, teaching practice is like the induction programme for the pre-service teachers through which they can learn how to be accommodated and assimilated in the school environment physically and professionally.

The teaching practice programme is de facto a crucial period for the pre-service teachers to learn how to handle the students who were from

diverse social, economic, and educational backgrounds and contexts. In the similar vein, R4 argued that

particularly, the internal supervisors are the key change agents of the pre-service teachers from novice teachers to trained teachers who are to be different from other disciplines, such as management, science, and humanities in terms of the mode of pedagogy, classroom management, and using teaching and learning materials; however, there is no any distinct quality of teachers from education.

Feedbacks and comments from tutors and peers play a crucial role to shape professional careers of pre-service teachers. The peer feedbacks and teacher feedbacks are to be considered positively in order to learn from one another. In this regard, Laughran (2002) asserts that the pre-service teachers learn to use appropriate teaching techniques, methods, approaches, classroom management, and maintaining relationships between teacher and students through sharing their experiences and reflections.

Teaching practice as a ritual to get degree

Teaching practice has been regarded as a ritual rather than as a special crucial period of transforming a novice teacher as a trained professional teacher through the teaching practice. In this issue, one of the respondents, R6 stated that “teaching practice has not been taken as a crucial period for the pre-service teachers in their teaching careers. Instead, it has given less priority even by internal and external evaluators, administrators and the institutions in which pre-service teachers were sent to conduct teaching practice for two weeks”. The teaching practice has to be considered as medical, engineering, and nursing internships. In medical and engineering, internship is conducted for more than 6 months to get the degree in medicine, engineering and nursing. The teaching practice in the Faculty of Education cannot be crucial as long as it has not been extended for at least 3 months. In this regard, the respondent, R7 argued that

the pre-service teachers cannot learn to be assimilated and accommodated in the school environment in 2 weeks period of teaching. The period of 2 weeks for real teaching is not sufficient time for them. There was 6 weeks period of real teaching practice during yearly programme of M.Ed. However, the real teaching period has been reduced for 2 weeks which is not sufficient for them.

Teaching practice in M.Ed. has been taken as a simple procedure to fulfill the basic requirement to get degree in education. Most of per-service

teachers were failure to evaluate their teaching and learning activities whether the specific objectives were achieved or not through their teaching (Subedi 2009).

Professional ways of engaging pre-service teachers through teaching practice

Teaching practice provides pre-service teachers with the lived experiences in the real teaching and learning environment. They are provided the opportunity to learn the art of teaching during the real world of teaching profession. In this regard, R2 argued

The pre-service teachers should perceive the value of teaching practice as the important aspect of their preparation for the teaching profession. There is a very significant role of teaching practice through which the prospective teachers were prepared for the real world of teaching. Teachers are greater than textbook, class size, classroom management, parent education etc.

Teachers play an important role in shaping the future career of the millions of individual learners and entire generation in the society. They are to be made self-regulated teachers through teaching practice. They can impact the economic, social, political and educational dynamism of the county disseminating skills and knowledge which translate into innovation and productivity (Goldhaber & Anthony 2004). In this context, one of the respondents, R4 stated

in fact, quality education is the backbone of any country which is impossible to conceive without having academically qualified and professionally accountable sound teachers in schools and universities. The prospective English teachers should be very expert in pedagogy in the classroom. If they are engaged in teaching practice with the effective teaching practice program, they can be very professional pedagogues in the field of teaching.

The pre-service teachers are to be made more accountable and self-regulated teachers through teaching practice. In order to make self-regulated professional teachers, they were to be monitored and supervised rigorously for more than 6 weeks rather than the period of 2 weeks during off-campus activities.

Root causes of being ineffective of teaching practice

One of the assigned requirements of teaching practice of M.Ed. is the construction of items of the concerned particular subject with specification

grid introduced by Nepal Examination Board. Having constructed the item, the pre-service teachers had to analyze and interpret the item to find out the adequacy of item on the basis of specification grid. In this regard, one of the respondents, R10 asserted

there are over loaded the allocated tasks for them to accomplish within 2 weeks period of time which is impossible for them to carry out. They require at least 6 weeks for accomplishing all of the allocated tasks properly. The two weeks period is very short to carry out the all of tasks which were prescribed in the curriculum of M.Ed. in English.

The timeframe for teaching practice is very short. They have to be allocated at least 6 weeks as off campus in real teaching activities to make them really professionally trained teachers in the field of teaching. Likewise, R9 claimed

due to the short period of time, most of the pre-service teachers copied and pasted the action research, construction of items and their analysis from their seniors by paying money which is very humorous and intellectual hatred in the field of teaching.

It is obvious that how they can collect data for action research within 2 weeks period of real teaching. Even they need more than 2 weeks to prepare the required documents. It is very humorous to conduct action research in 2 weeks. They need to observe the classroom problem at least 2 weeks. After diagnosing the classroom problems, they should develop proposal, research design and the tool. In the second phase, they should collect data and analyze and interpret the data. In this regard, R7 claimed

the timeframe of teaching practice should be at least for 3 months if they are really made professionally sound and trained teachers. Within this short period time, they cannot learn a lot regarding the main essence of teaching practice through the senior experienced teachers at school. The action research cannot be accomplished in 2 weeks.

Moreover, some of the internal supervisors from the schools and colleges are not expert enough to provide the adequate feedbacks and comments on the action research and constructing items and their analysis and interpretation. They lack of training to construct Items and analysis and interpretation of the items academically during the on campus activities.

Inadequacy of remuneration for supervisors and poor management of teaching practice

The supervisors were not ready to share their expertise, time and norms of professionalism to the pre-service teachers due to the poor remuneration being allocated as internal supervisors in the teaching practice programme. One of the respondents R9 stated

we were asked to observe the classes of pre-service teachers for 3 times. It takes 3 hours to manage the classroom observation of pre-service teachers. However, we were not paid even the charges of fuels and transportation fare while visiting schools to observe classroom and provide the feedbacks to the pre-service teachers.

The faculty of education should make the policy of providing adequate remuneration to the internal supervisors of teaching practice to make them more accountable. They are to be paid at least 5 thousand for being an internal supervisor of one school or college. Central Department of Education pays very negligible honorarium to the internal supervisors who are not faculties of this department. However, teaching practice has been included as the load of the faculties in the Faculty of Education. The faculties who were appointed as internal supervisors were not paid any transportation fare and daily allowance while visiting schools and colleges to observe the classes of pre-service teachers. In this regard, R6 claimed that “there should be well management of teaching practice from Faculty of Education to the department of teaching practice of each education college to make the teaching practice more scientific and productive. The respondent, R5 asserted that “there should be rigid and rigorous mentoring and monitoring activities during on-campus and off-campus activities. It is universally truth that the campus administrators are not very serious to monitor and provide the adequate mentoring in teaching practice.

CONCLUSIONS

The pre-service teachers were not provided with adequate constructive and fruitful feedbacks and comments from their internal supervisors as well as their peers while conducting micro and peer teaching during on-campus and off-campus activities. In order to be professionally competent teachers, they should be provided adequate feedbacks and comments. Moreover, there should be proper monitoring of the teaching practice programme from the concerned campus administration. The Faculty of Education should take teaching practice programme as the heart

of education; but it has been taken as ritual. The pre-service teachers are to be engaged with constructive professional programs as much as possible during on-campus and off-campus activities. The root causes of being ineffective of teaching practice of the Faculty of Education were lack of proper timeframe of teaching practice, lack of training and exposure on item construction and analysis and lack of proper remuneration to internal supervisors.

The pre-service teachers should be trained to make digital lesson plan with digital contents, teaching resources, and learners' activities during the micro-teaching and peer teaching practice. This is the age of ICT and digital era so the prospective teachers of school and university levels should be educated and trained the skills that are required to face the challenges of the with 21st century. The skills can not be obtained through the existing system of teaching learning practice at TU. The pre-service teachers are to be trained regarding the learning management system moodle prior to sending them in campuses and schools.

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