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Connecting Theory and Practice in Teacher Education: Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the course teachers' perceptions towards teaching practice. To meet the research objectives, interpretive paradigm was used adopting phenomenological research design based on qualitative research. The course teachers of teaching practice (Course No. Ed. 440) were its informants. They were selected purposively from Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara, which is the largest constituent campus of Tribhuvan University. In-depth interviews were taken with six course teachers from different subjects to generate information. Though teaching practice is the core of teacher education program, it has some constrains. The course is designed to provide the hands-on experience to the prospective teachers through rigorous practice under the close supervision of course teachers, but the output is not found as expected and the program is also not free from criticism. The study revealed that the program was not achieving its objectives prescribed by the curriculum. It was just becoming teaching not training in reality. Lack of motivation and dedication of prospective teachers; similarly, devotion and integrity of supervisors, cooperation of cooperating schools, university's policies, job opportunities in home country, unfair and flexible evaluation practices were

explored as the main issues and challenges for its effective implementation and output. The findings of the study will be useful to the policymakers, professionals, prospective teachers and other stakeholders to reform the present phenomenon.

KEYWORDS: Competency, prospective teachers, teacher education, teaching practice

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are considered as the nation builders. They need to be conscious, competent, confident and loyal to society to accomplish high responsibilities. Their personality, accountability and responsibility show the characteristics of good citizen and dignity (Prasadappa, 2017). They need to be role models so that they may transfer the

same to their students. The education provided to prospective teachers to enhance the academic and professional competencies is known as teacher education (Swennen & van der Klink, 2009). It incorporates teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills (National Campaign for Education Nepal, 2017). So, teacher education plays a decisive role to prepare the competent manpower for education sectors.

In Nepal, teacher education was started after the establishment of College of Education (CoE) in 1956 and Tribhuvan University (TU) was established in 1960. After the establishment of TU, the CoE became a component of TU and four years' graduation program was divided into two years' Intermediate and two years' Bachelor in Education programs (Joshi, 2003). Since then, it is continued by different names. Since 1956 to 1971, it was known as CoE, from 1971 to 1983 CoE changed into Institute of Education (IoE) and since 1983 it is renamed into Faculty of Education (FoE) (Adhikari, 2022). According to the names, rights and responsibilities are also changed, but main aim is the same. The aim of the program is to prepare professionally sound, qualified, trained and competent human resources having positive attitude towards teaching in the field of education (Adhikari, 2021). To be a teacher, s/he must have requirements of minimum assigned academic qualification, teaching license and success in teacher selection examination (National Campaign for Education Nepal, 2017). Pre-service teacher education is provided by the universities and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) conducts the exams for teaching license, teacher selection and promotion.

Since 2015, the four-year B.Ed. program has been implemented by FoE, TU. The course of teaching practice (Course No. Ed. 440) is also restructured and has been practiced. The nature of this course is fully practical. It is designed to provide hands-on experience to the prospective teachers (students of B.Ed. level) in the area of their profession through the rigorous practice. They acquire professional experiences in the university and cooperating schools under the close supervision of course teachers (teachers who teach the course of teaching practice). Theoretically, the program provides adequate learning experiences to the prospective teachers for making them competent in preparing effective lesson plans with appropriate teaching techniques and teaching aids based on the content to be taught, but in reality there is a gap between the theory and practice. A question arises here: what are the issues and challenges for this phenomena?

As being a faculty member of FoE, I have experienced some problems concerned about teaching practice. In some cases, it is difficult to find co-operating schools and they hesitate to accept prospective teachers. Some schools sent the practicing teachers back to the university without any teaching practice in their schools. The teachers who are teaching the teaching practice course are not only course teachers, but they have different roles as internal and external supervisors as well. So, their lived experiences of on campus and off campus program will be helpful to explore the insights towards its issues and challenges. This study will be useful to prospective teachers, teachers, supervisors, co-operating schools, policymakers and other stakeholders.

This study has been organized in the following manner. The first section introduces the study. The section two explains the review of the related literature and section three deals with the results and discussion, under this section different five themes are included. The conclusion has been placed at end of this paper.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section presents a review of related literatures about the study. Mainly it reviews the literatures about teacher education and teaching practice.

Teacher education is considered as the vehicle for preparing skilled human resources. Those who are interested and motivated to be a teacher, teacher educators,

educational planners and curriculum designers needed for educational sectors (Faculty of Education, 2020). Teachers should use their competencies in their professions. Mainly five competencies are needed to be a competent teaching professional such as adequate knowledge of subject matter, good communicative skills, instructional practices, evaluation practice and problem solving skills (Devi, 2014). Competent teachers can understand the central concept of content and apply innovative teaching techniques and strategies. Successful teachers need to be competent and efficient. They also need commitment and confidence (Varughese, 2005). Teachers' knowledge and skills help to develop confidence and supports the prospective teachers to arouse positive attitude towards their teaching and learning process.

The aim of FoE is to prepare qualified manpower as well as educational leaders required for the education sector of the country. Stakeholders are stating that FoE is losing its excellency and it is becoming like a dumping site (Dhungana, 2022). He also added that low graded students are choosing teacher education. Such types of students cannot maintain the quality as expected. Though TU has set eligibility criteria for enrollment in B.Ed., those students who secured 2.01 GPA in Grade 12 can only be admitted (Faculty of Education, 2020). Teacher Service Commission announces the highest vacancies of teachers for community schools, but examinees cannot pass the written examination as required by schools. Though B.Ed. graduated students have sufficient job opportunities, but caliber and high-graded students are not motivated towards teacher education.

In teacher education, paradigms are shifted; in the first wave of paradigm the aim of pre-service teacher education was to equip student teachers with necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for effective knowledge delivery to learners. Then, the second wave came as not only delivery but also quality services to satisfy stakeholders' needs. Now the third wave is to develop student teachers as facilitators who have contextualized multiple intelligence and competencies to create unlimited opportunities for students (National Campaign for Education Nepal, 2017). In this way, the role of teacher is as facilitator of multiple intelligences and sustainable development.

A high quality teaching practice program integrates knowledge and practice, which provides maximum opportunities for trying and testing new ideas in the cooperative and collaborative relationship. It helps to understand the full scope of teacher education and purpose of teaching practice as practicum underpinning teacher education program (Tuli & File, 2010). TU also provides the opportunities of practicum in the real context of schools. Teaching practice is core of teacher education to prepare thoughtful, reflective and inquiring teachers. The FoE designed the course of teaching practice to develop the proficiency in micro-teaching, peer teaching, teaching at school/ campus, peer observation, curriculum, and textbook analysis, organize co-curricular activities, test construction, different planning and overall report writing (Faculty of Education, 2020). Therefore, teaching practice is known as a site where prospective teachers practice the art of the teaching in real school context remaining close contact of supervisor.

In Myanmar, teacher education is provided by University of Education and it offers five years (Ten semesters) undergraduate program. Student teachers have to fulfill the requirements prescribed by the course. The teaching practice is done at the end of the fourth and sixth semester. Before school teaching they learn to conduct lesson study, peer group teaching, participate in school visit and observe the classroom and prepare lesson plans (Chaw & Kopp, 2021). It is the same as TU of Nepal. These skills are compulsory before joining the service. In Nepal, the school visit program has not practiced yet, the duration of the program is four years and teaching practice is in fourth year. Prospective

teachers participate in different activities for 110 hours in the campus and 20 days in cooperating schools.

In India, a study was held on the role of secondary teachers' education programs for the quality development of student teachers. Student teachers (boys = 520 and girls = 520) studying at B.Ed. college of Kanpur were the study population. The study found that teachers training program was very important to develop student teachers' personality that helped to improve self-confidence. The study recommended that more emphasis was given to teaching practice and duration should be expanded to six months as medical and engineering courses. The curriculum needs to be updated as modern and participatory pedagogies like a seminar, workshop, discussion and self-study should be adopted (Srivastava, 1999). This research provided high priority to teaching practice as medical science and engineering. In TU, the duration of school teaching is insufficient. It should be extended as India.

Likewise, another study was held in Myanmar in 2019 to explore the student teachers' perceptions towards their activities during teaching practice at schools. Mixed methods research (quantitative and qualitative) was applied. The final year students of teacher education program were selected purposively as research informants. The age range of the informants was 20 to 23. Two groups of total fourteen (seven from each group) informants took part in the study. The quantitative data were collected through questionnaire and qualitative information was generated through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The study found that the schools with the help of trainee teachers conducted co-curricular activities, school donation ceremonies, helping in administration work and leading debate, essay writing competition and correction of students' answer books during the teaching practice time. Under co-curricular activities, they taught music, dancing, physical exercise and the art of housework (Chaw & Kopp, 2021). They focused mainly on co-curricular activities than textbook teaching. Thus, Myanmar's education system gives priority to practical than theoretical. But in Nepal theoretical is the major focus. The course of teaching practice prescribed one co-curricular or extra activities that should be conducted during the school teaching.

In many countries, teacher education is provided in higher education, which is also not free from criticism. The ethics in teacher education is limited in literature; in fact, the inappropriate norms, plagiarism, cheating and shirking in examination, external pressure, poor academic skills, insufficient teaching and personality and organizational factors are disturbing to education (Swennen & Klink, 2009). Nepal is also not far from this situation.

The literature reveals that teacher education is pre-service training to prepare professionally committed manpower for the educational sectors. To provide hands-on experience, the teaching practice course is designed in four-year B.Ed. program as teacher education. Many literatures were found on teacher education, but very few materials were available on its issues and challenges. In Nepal, many education commissions were formulated and recommended for effective teacher education program to produce competent manpower. Paradigms are shifted in teacher education; policies and curricula were changed several times, but the situation remains the same.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted phenomenological research design, following qualitative approach and interpretive paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018a). This paradigm focuses on informants' experience in their real-life world and emphasizes the subjective interpretation of phenomena. Six course teachers from different subjects of B.Ed. fourth year and Course Code 440 (Nepali, English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical

and Economics groups) were selected purposively from Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara, which is the largest constituent campus of TU. The process of sampling was ended when no new phenomena can be found (Rosenthal, 2018). The record of the course teachers was taken from the department of educational administration of FoE, PNC. Information was gathered using unstructured interview as its research tool. Every second question in the interview was based on informants' previous answers. Frequently, follow-up interviews were made at the informants' convenient time and venue to saturate the information. It means that no additional information are being found (Rosenthal, 2018). The gathered information was transcribed and the Nepali language interview was translated into English listening the audio multiple times. Initial codes were created using a highlighter and making notes in the margin. Those codes were again revised and combined into themes. Interview transcript and findings were shared to the informants for the member checking. Zotero software was used for the in-text citation and referencing. Informants were assured of the voluntary participation and confidentiality of all information. Before generating information, the written consent was taken from informants. All interviews were audio recorded in the mobile device and after transcribing, it was deleted. Pseudonyms were kept for their confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the gathered information has been analyzed and discussed under five themes. They include the participation of prospective teachers, the course teacher as a close supervisor, the significance of micro teaching, the test construction and analysis, support of cooperating schools and lastly the evaluation system and role of external supervisors. They are presented as below:

Participation of Prospective Teachers

Without prospective teachers' rigorous participation and practice in teaching learning activities, efforts will be in vain. This course is designed to provide hands-on experiences to the prospective teachers in the area of their profession to prove themselves as good teachers or professionals. Most of the informants had the same experiences; one of the informants Dambar stated:

Prospective teachers are not regular. They want to earn money than to learn. They are looking for job in schools and other areas also. Their performance is very weak and takes it superficially. Those who are regular in class also do not participate actively. Feedback session is not effective. Errors are natural, but prospective teachers realized it as burden.

His statement revealed that the common and general problem of qualitative teaching learning activities is the irregularity of prospective teachers. The informants who had more than 20 years' experience was disappointed about his class. He explained that most of the prospective teachers were jobholders and earning money was more important than learning new things for them. Those who were jobless also found irregular in their curricular activities. They also spent their time looking for jobs. Their performance was very weak and they take teaching practice classes superficially. They were not found active in teaching learning activities. He added that errors are natural but prospective teachers do not accept it easily. Feedback session is very important for finding weaknesses and correct their weaknesses, but they do not enjoy in feedback session. Another participant Ekadev reminded a case that:

In 2019, among 700 prospective teachers, only 300 were eligible for external evaluation. In some cases, the irregular prospective teachers secure good marks

in other subjects and performance of these prospective teachers are also better than regular one.

The case clearly showed that most of the prospective teachers took teaching practice superficially. They did not fulfill minimum requirements as guided by the FoE.

In 2019, the Department of Teaching Practice strictly followed the course guidelines prepared by Dean's Office of FoE, TU. As a result, only 43% of prospective teachers were eligible for school teaching and external evaluation. The case proves the negligence of prospective teachers. In some cases, the prospective teachers who were irregular in class secured good marks in the theoretical subjects and showed active performance although they were not regular. Perhaps, they studied hard at home and that was their compulsion. Another participant Chandrkanta explained:

Prospective teachers' participation is the main problem. Though I managed classes in their comfortable time for irregular prospective teachers, more than 50% were out of contact. Those who were jobless or free did not attend their classes regularly. They neglected it. They were not enthusiastic and motivated.

Though the student intake was high, retention and achievement were found poor.

His case was the same. Prospective teachers did not attend their classes regularly. More than 50% of the total prospective teachers were found out of contact. Though he provided the flexible time to participate in the class in their convenient time, they did not contact to the course teacher. They were not sincere about their studies because even jobless prospective teachers did not participate regularly. It was their negligence.

The study indicated that the prospective teachers were not motivated and enthusiastic toward their study. The dropout rate was high. The study also showed that the retention and achievement of students were recorded low even though the enrolment rate was high for the course.

Course Teacher as a Close Supervisor

The prospective teachers obtain professional experiences from the university and cooperating schools under the close supervision of course teachers or internal supervisors. The course teachers are also known as facilitators. In this study, all the informants were course teachers or internal supervisors. The role of course teachers determine the success and failure of the course. In this regards, one of the informants Amar stated:

I am flexible; I cannot follow the guidelines rigidly. Though it is one year's course (150 hrs), the class does not run according to the university calendar. Very few classes are being held. The course is finished within two or three months. Even today, we have the hangover of the old three-year B.Ed. program. The program lacks integrity and no written feedback are given. There is no schedule of class supervision, monitoring of internal supervisors, no matching between the course and its implementation. In addition, there is no uniformity among departments.

The account revealed that the course teacher who had full authority of the course implementation did not follow the course guidelines prepared by FoE strictly. He was found to be flexible according to the prospective teachers' interest. Prospective teachers were not sincere about their regularity and active participation. The course was finished forcibly within two or three months without practicing all activities that were required by the syllabus. The internal supervisor said that because of the students' pressure, he lost his integrity. Generally, he did not provide written feedback though he supervised their classes regularly. The sector of monitoring and supervision was found weak.

Significance of Micro Teaching

Micro teaching is a training setting for the prospective teachers where complexities of the normal classroom teaching are reduced by: practicing one competent skill at a time, limiting the content to a single concept, reducing the size to ten to fifteen prospective teachers and reducing the duration of the lesson to five to ten minutes. It is a scaled down teaching encounter in class size and time. There is useful and adequate feedback in this teaching. It provides immediate feedback after completion of teaching. All the research informants have their common experiences as Chandrakanta expressed:

Teaching is an art and science. Active prospective teachers may pass theoretical examination by self-study. But the practical performance is impossible without practicing. To be competent and to enhance the practical competencies micro teaching, which is important. Student teachers can learn more from the peers' feedback than the course teacher. It enhances competencies and confidence. Some of the prospective teachers felt awkward and shy while taking video during their teaching.

The informant expressed that teaching is an art and science both. Prospective teachers may pass the theoretical subjects by self-study, but the practical performance and skills are difficult. Without participating in micro teaching under the teaching practice program, no prospective teachers can build confidence. To develop special teaching skills and to be competent practically, micro teaching is important. When the prospective teachers get more feedback from their peers and course teachers, they will get opportunities in the future. One of the most effective techniques of self-reflection is recording of their own teaching videos. But some of the prospective teachers showed their disinterest in the video recording during their presentations.

Test Construction and Analysis

Different kinds of test items are used to evaluate students' achievement. Tests are divided into the teacher-made test and standardized test. Under the teacher made test, different testing tools (oral, written and practical test) are practiced. Generally, the course included the objective and subjective test items. The objective items (multiple choices, true-false, completions and matching) have no effect of subjective opinion or judgment of scorer. It is free from bias and it covers a wide range of information or knowledge. The subjective items (long answer/ essay type and short-answer type) are used to evaluate abilities of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. One of the informants Bamdev expressed his experience about the test item construction as:

Though I taught prospective teachers to construct the test items, they are not sincere to construct them. They are very weak. They do not follow the proper instructions. It is the main weakness. They write long questions instead of answering the questions; the same thing happened for the short questions. Tick the right answer instead of the best answer. Only three alternatives/ distracters are kept in the multiple choice questions and equal options in column A and B in matching.

The statement shows that prospective teachers were not sincere about test construction. Though the course teachers taught them to construct different test items, they could not construct as they were taught. They were taught to construct two types of test items: subjective and objectives based on the lessons taught. The informant pointed out that most of the prospective teachers did not follow the proper instructions. They write long questions and short questions instead of long answer questions and short answer questions. Likewise, they write tick the right answer instead of tick the best answer for multiple choice questions. They cannot use proper stem/ premise, distracters/ foils and

key answer in the multiple choice questions (MCQ). Thus, the test construction is just found to be quantitative, not qualitative. They are prepared just for counting the required numbers as guidelines.

The item/test analysis is a process of assessing qualities of questions asked in the examination. It tries to find out the strong and weak aspects of test items. The result of item analysis helps to improve the test construction. Generally, the item analysis provides an information about the question: whether questions are based on objectives or not? It helps to determine difficulty level and discrimination index. It guides for clinical teaching. The majority of the informants expressed the similar ideas like Bamdev as:

I need training and orientation about item analysis. Only Mathematics background teachers and students can analyze item systematically. The guest teacher is needed for this portion. Without the item analysis test is not valid.

The statement shows that the teachers themselves are confused about the test item analysis and demand for training and orientation on the item analysis. Only Mathematics teacher was found familiar about it. They accepted that without analysis the test items are not valid.

Support of Cooperating Schools

The school which provides platform to prospective teachers to practice real teaching as the off-campus program is known as cooperating school. In initial days, such school was known as laboratory school. According to existing provision of teaching practice guidelines, prospective teachers have to go to cooperating schools for 20 days. The most of the informants expressed common ideas about the role of cooperating schools as shared by the informant Amar:

Some cooperating schools are not supportive as expected. They do not provide classes for practice. Some schools blame that student teachers are weak in performance but provide full marks. Most of the schools are very helpful and really cooperative. The renowned schools are less supportive than small. It is a great support to provide platform to use as laboratory.

It shows that the informants experienced that most of the schools are found positive and they welcome prospective teachers for practicing, but some of the renowned schools (in the sense of having large number of students and teachers) hesitated to provide a platform for practice teaching. They did not provide classes and complained that the prospective teachers are not able to deliver the training skills in their real classes of cooperating schools. Most of the schools are found positive, very helpful and really cooperative. The schools, which are providing a platform to use the schools as laboratory schools are supporting this program.

Evaluation System and the Role of External Supervisor as Evaluator

Mainly observing the performance and checking the overall report evaluation is performed by internal and external supervisors. The course teachers are the internal supervisors and 60% of total marks is allotted to them. Among the marks, 15% for micro teaching, 20% for peer teaching, 20% for school teaching and 5% by the concerned teacher of cooperating school. Likewise, 40% of total marks are allotted to external supervisors. They are appointed by the Dean's Office of FoE. Most of the informants had the common experience about evaluation practices as Ekadev expressed:

No uniformity in evaluation practices. Guidelines provide a distribution of marks to supervisors. Marks distribution is appropriate and adequate. The internal supervisor evaluates throughout the academic year and external supervisor observes in a few minutes. Evaluation is subjective. It is biased and differ

supervisors to supervisors. Some of the supervisors evaluate only by checking overall reports. It depends on supervisors' integrity.

The course teachers expressed that there was lack of uniformity in the evaluation process. It differed from person to person. Though, the course guidelines provided the areas of evaluation and marks distribution clearly, but the supervisors were found providing marks haphazardly. The informants said that evaluation is subjective and it depends on supervisors' mood and integrity.

Some of the supervisors observe more than two prospective teachers in a period and some of them evaluate only checking the overall report out of the classroom. It is also blamed that the evaluation is biased and not fair. Another participant Fuldev said a case:

Once I was appointed as an external supervisor. I provided him below the pass marks due to his poor performance. He threatened me. He had not fulfilled the basic requirements. I told him to fulfill minimum requirements. He gave me unnecessary pressure from different power centers. Do I evaluate by looking face? When prospective teachers fulfill the basic requirements, then, they can obtain pass marks.

The case shows that the external supervisors have to face unnecessary pressure from the students. Especially students' organizations pressure to do unfair evaluation. It also clarifies the evaluation practices in our university. Another informant Dambar criticized the external's evaluation as:

Some external supervisors do not maintain good coordination between the course teachers and head teachers of cooperating schools. Sometimes regular and good students are victimized. Evaluation is not appropriate and fair. Only few minutes of observation cannot do a fair evaluation. They observe two and more than two in a period. Remuneration also plays a significant role in the evaluation. There is not equal treatment between affiliated and constituent campuses.

The expression highlighted that the course teacher expressed a bitter experience that the external supervisors do not coordinate with the internal supervisors and head teachers of cooperating schools. They do not follow the course guidelines. They observed more than two prospective teachers' classes in a period. They behaved that there was not equal treatment between affiliated and constituent campuses. They expressed that evaluation was not appropriate and fair.

Discussion

Though teaching practice is core of teacher education, the output of this program is not as expected. There may be several manipulating factors behind it. In PNC, most of the prospective teachers were from rural areas and from marginalized communities. The jobholders are hardly present in teaching and learning activities. They depend on guide and guess papers (Adhikari, 2022). In such a situation, how we expect quality education? According to the TU examination controller's office in Balkhu, Kathmandu: in 2011 to 2015, the average pass percent was not more than 25 percent. More than 75 percent could not complete their B.Ed. degree each year. Those who have passed B.Ed. are also looking for jobs. According to the record of Teacher Service Commission, in the duration between 2011 to 2016, a total of 2,757 teachers were employed permanently. During the period, around 38000 were B.Ed. holders who were eligible to be permanent. In 2011-2013, a total of 2,286 secondary school teacher positions were advertised and 61,590 applied their applications, but only 2,146 applicants were recommended for jobs. Among them, 140 candidates failed in interview. In 2014-2016, only 611 were employed permanently (National Campaign for Education Nepal, 2017). They could not fulfill

minimum requirements. This situation raised a serious question on the relevancy of teacher education in future if the situation remains the same.

Though the syllabus allotted 150 hours for this course, only few classes are taken. According to the syllabus, each prospective teacher prepared 15 micro lesson plans and teaches 10 micro classes; likewise, they prepare 15 model lesson plans for peer teaching and teach six peer classes under the close supervision of course teacher and peers. The course teacher demonstrates a model class. S/he observes and provides a regular and immediate feedback to correct the weaknesses of the prospective teachers. But they do not fulfill minimum requirements. The course teachers have to rigorously facilitate and mentor the prospective teachers to prepare qualified and competent teacher as nation's needs and aspirations. There is no uniformity among the departments within an institution (Adhikari, 2022). The institution and concerned authority also do not play any role to monitor and supervise the program regularly. The course teachers play vital roles in a typical classroom and they are expected to demonstrate competences in various domains including lesson planning, practicing skills, managing classroom, nurturing professional and personal qualities (Swennen & Klink, 2009). The course teachers are not found satisfied themselves about the existing practices. Not only the modern curriculum but also the course cannot provide quality education without the competent course teachers. Thus, the teacher factor is vital (Varughese, 2005). Teachers have to be contextual, societal conceptual, transactional, ICT friendly, and skillful in the process of managing and evaluating the classroom procedure.

The course designs a provision of micro-teaching; prospective teachers have to prepare 15 micro lesson plans. Among them, they have to demonstrate at least 10 micro classes and observe two peers' classes and fill their observation form. It aims to modify prospective teachers' behavior according to the specified objectives. It also represents 5Rs. 'R' represents tape recording, reviewing, responding, refining and redoing (Aggarwal & Beichner, 1999). Though they are found shy, every student has an android mobile set that can easily record video and watch several times in individual and peer, which provide great opportunities for self-realization and reflection (Adhikari, 2022). Micro teaching is one of the most recent innovations in the teacher education program that aims to modify teachers' behavior as desired by the course's objectives.

Micro teaching simplifies the complexities of the regular teaching process. The standard setting for a micro class has 5-6 prospective teachers, teacher educators or course teachers and peers as supervisor, duration of class is 6 minutes and total duration of micro teaching cycle is 36 minutes (teaching- 6 mts., feedback session- 6 mts., re-plan- 12 mts., re-teach- 6 mts. and re- feedback- 6 mts.) (Mangal & Mangal, 2009). In this way, after participating in micro teaching, prospective teachers will be able to determine specific objectives, to select and apply appropriate methods, and to observe and evaluate peers' classes. The teaching practice course guidelines declared the 15-20 prospective teachers and 10-15 minutes of time. The curriculum needs to be updated as modern and participatory pedagogies like a seminar, workshop, discussion and self-study, which should be adopted (Srivastava, 1999). This study suggested and prioritized the teaching practice as the medical and engineering programs.

Except the course teacher of Mathematics, no other teachers have the ideas of item analysis. Though there is no provision of item analysis after administrating and scoring the examination, the informants focused on the need of item analysis to standardize the test. Its ultimate goal is to bring an improvement in the qualities of questions which bring positive impact in teaching and learning activities. The course teachers realised the need of orientation or training on item analysis. the guest teacher culture may support for this purpose.

According to the course guidelines, at the end of the session, the teacher education institutes send prospective teachers to cooperating schools. Though 150 hours are allotted for this course, they go to cooperating schools only for 20 days, which is too short. It has only been a kind of completing formality. The concerned authority should maintain a good relationship between the teacher education institutes and cooperating schools. To make it very responsible and accountable, the head teachers have the right to supervise and evaluate the student teachers, but it is also perfunctory. Ridiculously, the head teachers blame that prospective teachers are very weak, but they give full marks as a supervisor, which shows the culture of giving marks haphazardly (Adhikari, 2022). The teacher education institutes and cooperating schools have reciprocal responsibilities that universities produce the human resources and schools to be employed them later. The role of the universities and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is vital.

At the end of the session, the student teachers are evaluated by the internal and external supervisors. The course teachers are known as internal supervisors and external supervisors are appointed by Dean's Office of FoE. There is limitation of 40% and 80% of marks as the evaluator should write remarks to give less than 40 and more than 80 percent. If the evaluation is biased and unfair, how can we provide justice to the students? The course teachers supervise them throughout the year and 60% of the total marks is allotted to them, but the external supervisors give a few minutes' time and provide 40% of marks.

Though the external supervisors are appointed by Dean's Office, most of the externals are from the same campus and already known face. The prospective teachers are found victimized by halo effects and horn effects in the evaluation process. Only few minutes of class observation cannot evaluate all domains of prospective teachers' skills and activities. The internal supervisors also blamed that they observe two or more in a period (Adhikari, 2022). Most of the course teachers also play the role of external supervisors and accept the situation. They have the experience of external supervisors in constituent and affiliated campuses. They shared that the remuneration as they play significant role in the evaluation. The prospective teachers of affiliated campuses obtained higher marks than the marks of the prospective teachers of constituent campuses. Therefore, the prospective teachers are evaluated in terms of the nature of the campuses. The course teachers expressed grievances about unfair evaluation ignoring their performance.

Therefore, to make the evaluation system more reliable and valid, the concerned authority has to make it more scientific. Rubrics have to be properly used for a fair evaluation. The external supervisors need to be appointed from out of the home institutes to have a fair as well as better evaluation of the prospective teacher (Adhikari, 2022). The external supervisors are appointed by Dean's Office of FoE for final evaluation. They have to evaluate the prospective teachers by coordinating with internal supervisors and observing their performance in a live classroom setting. Based on their lesson plan, teaching aids, knowledge of subject matter, teaching strategies, classroom management, regularity and their impression are observed and evaluated. About 40% of total marks are allotted to the external supervisors.

This study has some limitations, which did not include the affiliated campuses. The prospective teachers, head of the department of teaching practice, head teachers of co-operating schools and Dean and Assistant Deans of FoE as research informants were vital stakeholders. Though it has some limitations, the findings of this study will be a valuable asset for the related field in the future.

CONCLUSION

The course of teaching practice was found to be the core of teacher education. The program was relevant and appropriate to prepare qualified and competent human resources for educational sectors, but the output of the program was not achieved as expected. There were some issues and challenges. The prospective teachers were not motivated, not enthusiastic in participating teaching learning activities. They took the course teaching practice as superficially. The course teachers as internal supervisors were also found less satisfied themselves. They lost their integrity because of the students' unnecessary pressures. They were flexible as the prospective teachers' interest who do not follow the course guidelines strictly as prescribed by the curriculum. Micro teaching helps to develop special skills and sharing feedback among peers and course teachers. They do not participate in micro teaching actively. Video recording of own teaching is a good idea for self-reflection, but they felt uncomfortable to record it. They were poor in test construction, especially they did not apply proper instructions. Except mathematics teachers, other teachers did not have proper ideas in item analysis. They demanded training on item analysis. Most of the community schools are found positive, helpful and really cooperative to provide a platform for teaching, but some of the schools were unsupportive. The evaluation was not fair and uniformity among departments and supervisors. Due to lack of good coordination between internal and external supervisors, good prospective teachers were victimized. No monitoring and supervision were held by the concerned authorities. Thus, FoE, campuses and other stakeholders need to pay a serious attention and take actions to improve the program.

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