

Assessing the learning journey: Student-Teacher Perspectives on Practicum Effectiveness in Bachelors of Education (B. ED) program in Quetta-Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Education is vital to the nation's progress for teachers and crucial to the schooling system. For a better instructor teacher, education programs are developed to show the teaching path of a student teacher. This research aimed to study "perceptions of student teachers about the effectiveness of practicum in Quetta city." To determine student educators' opinions regarding the Practicum's importance and adequacy. The research type was quantitative, and the population was 30 student-teachers, with 10 student-teachers from each session who had experienced Practicum. The research sample was the 4th, 6th, and 8th-semester student-teachers from the Department of Education of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University. For data collection, a Questionnaire with 15 questions and respondents were used to select the participants through a purposive sampling technique. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed through SPSS. It was found that trainee educators perceive the Practicum as a practical, adequate, and essential part of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program. It is suggested that some more effective tasks should improve the student teacher's classroom management and problem-solving skills. Also, there should be some tasks for understanding the school's administration the curriculum developers should contribute. It is also suggested that the Government fund the students' teachers to remove their economic problems in the teacher education program. So, the Practicum helps develop effective student teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in the progress of every nation. For the better education of the students, effective teachers are needed first. For this purpose, student teachers are getting their education from a B.Ed. (Hons) four-year program in which theoretical and practical subjects are included to develop effective teachers. Practicum, which is part of B.Ed. (Hons). Through a practicum, the student teachers can teach practically in the school classrooms and perform observational tasks. This is a chance for the student instructors to develop their skills, such as classroom management skills, teaching, and problem-solving abilities (Bashir, Malik et al. 2014). A crucial component of the B.Ed. is the Practicum. Student teachers interact directly with the school, classroom, and students through Practicum. By Practicum, the student teachers learn how to teach in the school, how to manage the class, how to use different and new methodologies of teaching in the school for better learning of the students, how to do lesson planning, and how to control the class in the teaching-learning process (Manzar-Abbas and Lu 2013, Iqbal, Naseem et al. 2020).

The world is changing impressively in all aspects, communally and cost-effectively, so slow movement for the future is not predicted in any element. So, as the change develops in the education system, including school, teachers, and students learning, more than ever before, there is a need for more rapport between teachers and students. Based on this requirement, teacher training and teacher education are encouraged. To meet this requirement, a teacher who continuously teaches must be a learner, which is very compulsory (Schaffner, Hartley et al. 2016). Practicum which would be named teacher training, is a teaching practice that is practically supervised and is a necessary part of preservice education for the professional development of student teachers in all aspects of teaching (Körkkö, Kyrö-Ämmälä et al. 2016, Peterson-Ahmad, Hovey et al. 2018).

According to Buckworth, (2017) various names are given for practice teaching, such as Practicum, teaching practices, field studies, and student teaching. According to the survey, a Practicum is a program or course by which the students are sent to schools, usually junior to the student teachers' institute, where they are learning with the purpose of teaching the subjects they have a specialty in particular periods (Khan, Hussain et al. 2016). During that specific period, the student teacher imagines or gets the place of the school cooperating teacher or school subject teacher,

similarly taking on the allowed course work given by the school co-operative teacher. Teaching practice is when students are taught under the command or control of an experienced teacher. The teaching practice aims to provide teaching experience to students of different ages and environments and to apply the learned theory to teaching. This stage of training not only contributes to the improvement of professional norms but also helps reduce the student teacher's nervousness about teaching and learning classroom techniques (Bashir, Malik et al. 2014; Williams, 2009).

According to different studies, teaching practice, or Practicum, offers the chance to put the learning and teaching ideas covered in coursework into practice (Qazi, Rawat et al. 2012). Research studies propose that the student teacher's outlook on the Practicum is fundamental and necessary for their orientation in professional life (Tatto, 1998). They trust that the practical experiences of the supervisor while observing their lessons, their feedback from cooperating teachers, and working out different teaching strategies throughout the school experience are the essential aspects of student teachers in their professional development (Qazi, Rawat et al. 2012). According to most studies, student teachers believe that Practicum is the period to reflect; teaching is not a job for them (Nesbitt, Barry et al. 2022). From this viewpoint, the Practicum can significantly shape how student teachers see teaching and learning. (Ngoepe, 2014). (Smith, 2000) states that the experiences of student teachers do not define the new teacher. Only the subjects they have taught will represent their professional achievement (Lambeth & Smith, 2016). According to the research, the emphasis is on the requirement for quality education (Shahzad, Shahzad et al. 2018). For quality education, it is required to relate or associate the different institutions at various stages to strengthen the teacher education programs (Ahmad & Ali, 2018).

Objective

1: To determine student-teacher opinions regarding the Practicum's effectiveness in the B. ED program in Quetta-Pakistan.

2: To Investigate the adequacy of Practicum in teacher-education programs in Quetta-Pakistan.

Research Questions

1: How do teachers and learners discover the effectiveness of Practicum in the universities of Quetta-Pakistan?

2: What is the adequacy of Practicum in teacher-education programs in Quetta-Pakistan?

Significance of study

The significance of this study emerges from the importance of Practicum in training student teachers as professionals. It helps the student teacher express their views about to which extent the Practicum is practical and what improvements are to be made in the Practicum. Determining the needed improvements helps the curriculum developers and policymakers change the Practicum to make it more effective and learnable. This study will also be helpful to department teachers as supervisors and co-coordinators on how to improve their instructions for tasks, observations, behaviours in the school, and collection of evidence for the student teacher. Facilitating the training process to meet the objectives of the practicum experience for prospective teachers could benefit the education stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

practicum is the subject for the student teachers in which they are allowed to build up their confidence, make their teaching effective, use their pedagogical skills, manage different behaviours of the students in the classroom, and use different methodologies of teaching to enhance their skills of teaching (Mohan, 2019). The importance of Practicum can be more evident if we find out student teachers' perceptions about its effectiveness (Al-Mekhlafi, 2010). It was found by the research that in the schools as discipline problems, old teachers' behaviors towards new methodologies, and parents-teacher meetings didn't happen, the student's teachers showed their perceptions that they are enthusiastic about coming in this passion of teaching and bringing change for the better learning of the students in the classroom (Saifi et al., et al. 2013).

Teaching Practicum

There is the need to experience a Practicum to be a teacher. By Practicum, an individual attains the experience of teaching. Teacher education programs or preservice Teacher preparation must create a foundation to engage the student teachers in continuous development (Torrance & Forde, 2017). Practicum helps the student teachers know about their performance and gives them a source to become effective classroom managers. While serving as trainee teachers during their Practicum, they face many difficulties and respond to those difficult conditions (Mutlu, 2014; Fatima G. et al., 2016). According to the research (Smith, 2005), "The practicum experience is one fraught with difficulties, dilemmas, and challenges as the student attempts to negotiate their way along a hazardous path of competing professional policies and practices (Imsa-ard, Wichamuk et al. 2021). Consequently, it is crucial to put the student teachers first, where they listen to the students, find out their problems, know their level, and get the students with themselves in the classroom and come out of the school unmarked.

According to (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005), the Practicum helps teachers know about their students, their similarities and differences, and their atmosphere. More Practicum develops constructive attitudes of the student teachers concerning the teaching profession and the school students they teach. Besides this Practicum:

- a. Build up the student teachers' activities and performance in teaching practice.
- b. Make them efficient teachers and also comprehend the environment of the school.
- c. Make them capable of realizing the realistic needs of the students.
- d. Help them to contract the space between practice and theory.
- e. Build up their professional and own efficacy.

Prospective teacher education program (PTEP) intends to give a chance to student teachers to convey knowledge and apply the theories they have learned in their classrooms and the information. Moreover, the Practicum makes them capable of combining practice theory and observation (Imsa-ard, Wichamuk et al. 2021). By practicum experience, the student teachers comprehend the school's culture and its components; it also helps them construct their teaching point of view. Practicum allows the student teachers to converse their teaching experiences with the experts and connect the teaching theories with practice (Imsa-ard, Wichamuk et al. 2021).

"Theory without practice is empty; practice without theory is blind" (Imsa-ard, Wichamuk et al. 2021) state that they, as researchers, think that practice or Practicum is that tool that lights up the student teachers' teaching methods instruct them to involve themselves in the meaning full learning situations and practices. According to the study the achievement of teachers does not only depend on their knowledge of theories of teaching but also on the effective Practicum, which gives them all the essential teaching skills and attitudes that their teaching experience by Practicum constructs (Lingam, Lingam et al. 2014).

Perception of student-teacher about the effectiveness of Practicum

The study highlights the opinions of prospective teachers about teaching efficacy in teaching subjects given by the state curriculum and how to manage students' behavioural problems in the classroom. (Imsa-ard, Wichamuk et al. 2021) Support the idea that the opinions of the student teacher on the given content of the subject they are going to teach influence how they teach it. Moreover, the study of Clement (1999) and Anderson, Lawson et al. (2006) shows that the students are primarily worried about management and discipline problems in the classroom, which is a reality that affects their teaching efficacy during student teaching. Practicum helps improve the self-efficacy of the student teachers. Though student teachers observed some of the deficiencies in the school, like the discipline of the school sometimes, the behaviours of the old teachers toward new methodologies of teaching was traditional, and not having teachers' meetings because of these deficiencies, the prospective teacher showed their enthusiasm to adopt the profession of teaching and bring change in teaching and learning process (Imsa-ard, Wichamuk et al. 2021).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study focused on the perception of student-teachers about the effectiveness of Practicum in Quetta City, and a quantitative research study was used to collect the data. A purposive sampling technique was used to select samples from the population for this study. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of individuals according to their traits, expertise, and experiences. It helps in this study to make generalizations from the sample results back to the population. The participants are students in the 4th, sixth, and eighth semesters. Ten students from each class were selected. These classes are designated as samples based on students who have experienced the Practicum in Quetta City public schools. Students of B.Ed. (Hons) program from semesters 4th, 6th, and 8th were selected from the education department of SBK Women's University, and 30 student-teachers comprised the population of this study. Data was collected through an adopted questionnaire to achieve the study's objectives and to get the perceptions of students of B.Ed. (Hons) who have experienced Practicum, and whether the effectiveness of Practicum and the role of the Practicum is adequate in teacher education programs. The questionnaire has a 5 Likert scale of agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree; in the questionnaire, we collected data about student-teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of running the practicum process and the adequacy of the Practicum.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section overview contains a detailed discussion of the analysis of collected data. Data analysis is a technical field, and every effort has been made to provide researchers with an accurate presentation of data. The study was limited to only the girls of Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University Quetta, who were selected for this study, so data was collected and summarized by SPSS version 20. Here, ST refers to the student-teacher in the data results.

Table 1: Is Practicum an integral part of B.Ed. (Hons) Program"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
A	Agree	17	57%	94% (agree)
B	Strongly agree	11	37%	
C	Neutral	1	3%	3% (neutral)
D	Disagree	1	3%	3% (disagree)
E	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 57% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 37% of respondents strongly agreed, and 3% of respondents responded neutral, and 3% responded disagree.

Table 2: Does Practicum motivate you towards teaching"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	17	57%	90% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	10	33%	
3	Neutral	3	10%	10% (neutral)
4	Disagree	0	0%	0% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	

The above table shows that 57% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 33% of respondents strongly agreed, 10% of respondents responded neutral, 0% responded to disagree, and 0% strongly disagreed.

Table 3: Do you think Practicum helps the student teachers in their professional development"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	13	44%	94% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	15	50%	
3	Neutral	1	3%	3% (neutral)
4	Disagree	1	3%	3% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 44% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 50% of respondents strongly agreed, 3% of respondents responded neutral, 3% responded to disagree, and 0% strongly disagreed.

Table 4: Practicum makes student teachers creative for developing activities"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	14	47%	94% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	14	47%	
3	Neutral	1	3%	3% (neutral)
4	Disagree	1	3%	3% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 47% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 47% of respondents strongly agreed, 3% of respondents responded neutral, 3% responded to disagree, and 0% strongly disagreed.

Table 5: Is Practicum a source to apply the pedagogical skills"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	8	27%	87% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	18	60%	
3	Neutral	3	10%	10% (neutral)
4	Disagree	1	3%	3% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 27% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 60% of respondents strongly agreed, 10% of respondents responded neutral, 3% responded to disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Table 6: Is Practicum effective in converting change-bringing theories of B.Ed.? (Hons) into practice by student teachers"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	4	13%	77% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	19	64%	
3	Neutral	6	20%	20% (neutral)
4	Disagree	1	3%	3% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 13% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 64% of respondents strongly agreed, 20% of respondents responded neutral, 3% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Improvements in student teachers by Practicum

Table 7: Is the Practicum started by student teachers with trust in their teaching abilities"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	15	50%	90% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	12	40%	
3	Neutral	3	10%	10% (neutral)
4	Disagree	0	0%	0% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 50% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 40% of respondents strongly agreed, 10% of respondents responded neutral, 0% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Table 8: Does Practicum build the confidence of the student teachers"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	15	50%	100% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	15	50%	
3	Neutral	0	0%	0% (neutral)
4	Disagree	0	0%	0% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 50% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 50% of respondents strongly agreed, 0% of respondents responded neutral, 0% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Table 9: Does Practicum develop your classroom management skills"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	11	37%	90% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	16	53%	
3	Neutral	3	10%	10% (neutral)
4	Disagree	0	0%	0% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 37% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 53% of respondents strongly agreed, 10% of respondents responded neutral, 0% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Table 10: Do student teachers ' problem-solving skills in the classroom are improved by practicum"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	5	17%	80% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	19	63%	
3	Neutral	4	13%	13% (neutral)
4	Disagree	2	7%	7% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 17% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 63% of respondents strongly agreed, 13% of respondents responded neutral, 7% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Table 11: Practicum is allowing student teachers to use new teaching methods"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	13	43%	90% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	14	47%	
3	Neutral	2	7%	7% (neutral)
4	Disagree	1	3%	3% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 43% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 47% of respondents strongly agreed, 7% of respondents responded neutral, 3% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Table 12: Does Practicum focus on student teachers' content knowledge"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	9	30%	94% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	19	64%	
3	Neutral	1	3%	3% (neutral)
4	Disagree	1	3%	3% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 30% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 64% of respondents strongly agreed, 3% of respondents responded neutral, 3% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Table 13: Did you understand the administration tasks of the school by practicum"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	10	33%	76% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	13	43%	
3	Neutral	4	14%	14% (neutral)
4	Disagree	3	10%	10% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 33% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 43% of respondents strongly agreed, 14% of respondents responded neutral, 10% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Table 14: Did you experience the process of administration during Practicum in the school"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	10	33%	66% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	10	33%	
3	Neutral	7	24%	24% (neutral)
4	Disagree	3	10%	10% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 33% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 33% of respondents strongly agreed, 24% of respondents responded neutral, 10% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

Table 15: Did the role of Practicum in B.Ed. (Hons) program is satisfactory"?

ST	Responses	Frequencies	percentages	
1	Agree	15	50%	80% (agree)
2	Strongly agree	9	30%	
3	Neutral	6	20%	20% (neutral)
4	Disagree	0	0%	0% (disagree)
5	Strongly disagree	0	0%	
	Total	30	100%	100%

The above table shows that 50% of respondents agreed with the above statement, 30% of respondents strongly agreed, 20% of respondents responded neutral, 0% responded disagree, and 0% responded strongly disagree.

FINDINGS

It is found in this study that Practicum is a required component of the B.Ed. (Hons) program. It provides experience and practical practice opportunities to the students of B.Ed. (Hons); the students of B.Ed. (Hons) They also showed their perceptions in this study, and they mostly showed that the bachelor of education program practicum is the most significant component of the B.Ed. It helps them to experience teaching and enhance their teaching skills. According to most respondents, teaching in a school without a Practicum would not be realistic because, by a practicum, they have taught in the school based on teaching standards. It was found that for most respondents, the Practicum motivated them towards teaching, and the Practicum helped them in their professional growth as student teachers. The observation tasks in the Practicum bring the student teacher's attention to the teaching management skills. According to most respondents, the Practicum is the source to put the teaching abilities to use and convert change-bringing theories of B.Ed. (Hons) into practice by the student-teacher. For most respondents, Practicum helps the student teachers build their confidence, develops classroom management skills, and improves problem-solving skills. Student-teachers can use new teaching methods during Practicum. According to most respondents, Practicum is an integral part of this program because practicum students understand the administration tasks of the school, and they experience the school's administration process during Practicum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Practicum is the most essential part of the B.Ed. (Hons) program and its effectiveness is clarified by assessing the perceptions of the student teachers who have experienced Practicum. Practicum is most important for the professional development of the student-teachers. It is still very effective for the student-teachers. However, more contributions are needed to make it more effective and give more opportunities to the student-teachers to use new methodologies in the classroom. Some respondents disagreed that a Practicum helps them develop management skills; they can't apply their change, bringing theories into the classroom.

According to the student teacher's responses, the Practicum process requires new and creative tasks to be included in the course, which would be effective in developing the problem-solving skills of the student teacher. Problem-solving skills are vital for the effective teaching of the student teacher, and it is not ignorable to enhance this skill for the student teacher. The curriculum developers should include some practical tasks in a practicum that help the student-teachers strengthen their problem-solving skills and classroom management skills in teaching. Some

respondents responded that they are not entirely aware of the administration processes of the school; for these, all the curriculum developers should work and add some different tasks.

The adequacy of the Practicum is directly related to its effectiveness. It is also adequate if the Practicum is practical for the student teachers in their teaching-learning. To make it sufficient, more attention is required from the curriculum developers to include more creative tasks to enhance the pedagogical skills of the student teachers. The economic problems of the student teachers also affect their hard work in the Practicum, so the Government or stakeholders should fund them or aid them in making it more effective for the student teachers.

CONCLUSION

This study was about the perceptions of student-teachers and the effectiveness of Practicum. So, this study found that the student-teacher perceives Practicum as the most essential part of the B.Ed. (Hons) program, and it helps the professional development of student-teachers. The Practicum consists of tasks and lessons. In the Practicum, the supervisor and cooperating teacher's role is essential. They help the student-teacher perform their best in the Practicum. The most crucial component of the Practicum is developing a portfolio. A Practicum portfolio helps the student-teachers to know about their learning achievement during the Practicum. Practicum is helpful for students and trainers to improve their use of teaching methodologies for the better learning of the students. It makes the student teachers creative in creating new and practical activities for teaching the students in the classroom, and it enhances the classroom management skills of the student teachers. Practicum improves the problem-solving abilities of the student teachers during Practicum. The trainee educators understand how to control the classroom and maintain the students' behaviours.

Additionally, trainee teachers learn about the school administration after experiencing the Practicum. Practicum is helpful for the student-teachers to hone their instructional techniques, give out their hidden skills, and make them effective teachers. In the Practicum, a student teacher performs different observation tasks and learns from them; the student-teacher uses Audio visual aids for effective teaching and learning process, uses various activities to make their lesson more exciting and learnable, applies different pedagogical skills, evaluates the learning of the students, understands the importance of evaluation of students learning by Practicum. This study also showed that a Practicum is adequate for a B.Ed. (Hons) program. Practicum consists of different processes, and it helps the student-teachers in their professional development to become effective teachers in all aspects of teaching. So, this study has shown the importance of Practicum in B.Ed. (Hons) program and making the student teachers effective teachers in the future to bring change in the teaching-learning process in schools.

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