
SCHOOL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME- A TIME TO LOOK BACK AND REFLECT

Jasleen Kaur

Asst. Prof.

GHG Khalsa College of Education, Gurusar Sadhar, Ludhiana

The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively, but in critical measure upon the quality of their education, the quality of their education depends more than upon any single factor, upon the quality of their teacher. (NPE-1986)

Teacher education has undergone tremendous change globally and India is also not lacking behind in transforming Teacher Education. Nation building is not just a fancy term, it is a serious business handed over to the teachers- the back bone of the society. Nearly after a decade of field try out and another decade of discussions the teacher education programme was restructured as per recommendations of relevant commissions, policy planners and norms given by NCTE. A two year B.Ed programme with substantial changes in theory and practicum was proposed by NCTE in 2014 and implemented in 2015. A major chapter introduced in the two year programme was a herculean jump from a 40 days teaching practice in the traditional B.Ed programme to a 20 weeks School Internship Programme in the two year system. The present paper tries to explore that after 8 years of implementation what are the perceptions, worries and confusions of stake holders with respect to extended form of internship and related matters and what measures can be taken to improve the internship programme.

Argument for two year B.Ed programme- A Brief historical perspective

Reforms in Education pay a great thrust on improvement in teacher effectiveness, which undoubtedly requires consistent up gradation of teacher-education programme. Over the last three decades in India, the issue of reorienting the curriculum and extending the duration of secondary stage teacher education has received earnest attention.

- A keen examination of the reports of various commissions and committees indicates recommendations for longer duration of B.Ed. programme. It was also stamped by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in its judgment on 15 June 1993. "The Teachers Training Institutes are meant to teach children of impressionable age and we cannot let loose on the innocent and unwary children the teachers who have not received proper and adequate training. True, they will be required to pass the examination but that may not be enough. Training for a certain minimum period in a properly organized training institute is essential before a teacher may be duly launched."
- The National Curriculum Framework-2005 had also remarked that the one year teacher -education programmes trained teachers for a system in which education is seen as the transmission of information. Thus teacher-education programmes neither accommodated the upcoming ideas in context and pedagogy nor paid a heed to the issue of linkages between school and society. The knowledge is perceived by pupil teachers as 'given', embedded in the curriculum and accepted without doubt or query. Curriculum, syllabi and textbooks are hardly critically examined by the student-teacher or the regular teacher. The one year teacher-education programmes lacked the opportunities of reflecting upon experiences in the field hence failed to empower

student teachers in becoming agents of change. The conventional one year B.Ed programme suffered from several constraints like ineffective curriculum which was rigidly executed, lack of proper training, and an inadequate duration of practice teaching programmes which led to the failure of teacher education institutions in delivering its purpose- training and supplying competent teachers for the nation.

THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO BEGIN A TWO YEAR B.ED. PROGRAMME:

The NCTE prepared the curriculum framework for teacher education in 1998 and recommended beginning a two-year B.Ed Programme to prepare quality teachers. The NCTE in collaboration with NCERT crafted four different syllabi for starting this two-year B.Ed. programme in its four regional institutions in the year 1999. This field try out gave valuable insights and proved effectiveness of 2 year B.Ed programme thus encouraging the policy makers to adopt the system at the national level.

NATIONWIDE ADOPTION OF TWO YEAR B.ED PROGRAMME WITH 20 WEEKS OF INTERNSHIP

The concept of internship in teacher education has been adopted from the medical profession. Both the professions are skill based professions; and require practical knowledge of the field. The duration of the B.Ed. course has increased to two years from session 2015-17 as per NCTE Regulation, 2014. Keeping in mind the suggestions for having longer internship periods given by previous committees and commissions, the sustained engagement with schools as a partnership model in the form of school internship provides immense opportunities for pre-service teachers to teach and participate in school activities record and observe the actual learners' behaviour in the classroom and within the campus etc. It also provides a platform to analyse and reflect the pedagogical practices in use by regular and experienced teachers, developing and maintaining the teaching-learning resources, developing unit plans and maintainin the reflective journals etc. (NCFTE, 2009).

Thus in the 2 year programme, student teachers have to undergo two pre-internships in the first year followed by 16 week school internship program in three phases. With the introduction of this program, student teachers are exposed to real teaching practice in the school classroom setting . The switching over from a brief teaching practice of 40 days in earlier one year B.Ed. course to 16 week long internship program in two year B.Ed. course is an effort towards improving teacher preparation program in context of present day changing learning paradigms. The earlier role of teacher educators to immerse student teachers in experiential learning and critical reflection has now been shifted to school mentors. The role of the mentor teacher as specified in the new curriculum is to share his/her professional experiences, present model lessons, assess student teachers' performance, and provide on-site guidance and support during internship. Therefore, effectiveness of school internship program depends on mentoring schools and teachers to a larger extent. But there are number of issues pertaining to efficacy of mentoring schools and teachers to provide sufficient opportunities to student teachers to engage in experiential learning and reflective observation.

Roles and responsibilities of each and every partner in the teacher education programme were clearly delineated.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NCTE:

According to the NCTE, Central and State Education Departments, affiliating bodies, teacher education institutions and schools have to share the responsibility of preparing future teachers. The roles and responsibilities of different organizations of teacher education are elaborated as follows.

- Formulate and notify Internship Policy (already given in Regulations 2014).
- Develop Internship Handbook for the use of Teacher Education Faculty, Student Teachers, School, Principals and Mentor Teachers.
- Elaborate Internship Tasks and Assessment Framework in the Handbook

Roles and Responsibilities of State Education Department:

- Maintain database of TEIs in the State.
- Work out the requirement of Internship/ Lab Schools @10 schools per 100 student-teachers (5 per 50 student-teachers).
- Formulate internship policy of the state and issue guidelines for the District Education authorities concerning identification and monitoring of internship schools.
- Compile monitoring reports received from the districts and forward the consolidated report to the NCTE. District Level.
- Prepare internship calendar in consultation with affiliating bodies.
- Allocate schools to TEIs in the district.
- Monitor internship periodically and send reports to the state headquarters

Roles and Responsibilities of Affiliating Bodies:

- Prepare a calendar of school internship in consultation with the state education department.
- Develop, notify and circulate the scheme of evaluation for the internship component.
- Suggest procedures to be followed by TEIs and internship schools for assessing student-teachers' performance.
- Undertake periodical monitoring of TEIs (along with DEOs) and of internship and send **consolidated report to NCTE**.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher Education Institutions:

- Provide Internship Handbooks to the internship schools.
- Organise orientation-cum-consultation meetings with the school principals and mentors teachers.
- Develop supplementary material for additional activities in collaboration with mentor teachers.
- Hold fortnightly review meetings with mentor teachers. •
- Hold follow-up meetings with student-teachers at regular intervals in the TEI.
- Monitor implementation of internship including observation of practice teaching.
- Assess, in collaboration with school mentor-teachers, the internship performance of student teachers.

Roles and Responsibilities of Internship /Lab School:

- Identify well-qualified and adequately-motivated teachers to be associated with TEIs as mentor teachers.

- Depute the mentor-teachers to participate in the orientation meetings in the TEI.
- Make available all school facilities to the student-teachers such as library, laboratories, playgrounds etc.
- Permit the student-teachers to participate and contribute in all activities of the school such as school assembly, cultural activities, PTA meetings, games, inter-house competitions, etc., and guide in the subject practice teaching by student-teachers.
- Participate in the assessment of students' performance.
- Address promptly the problems and difficulties of student-teachers

Tasks of Prospective Teachers' During Internship:

- During Internship, the student-teachers are required to undertake a variety of activities relating to classroom teaching, classroom management, and organisation of school-based and community-based activities of teaching. The student-teachers are required to develop a repertoire of understandings, competencies, and skills. They have to undertake some activities in the first part of the internship and some other in the second part. A few such activities are suggested below:
- Understanding the Internship School and the community around.
- Analysis of school syllabus and textbooks.
- Observing the classroom teaching of regular teachers.
- Observation of classroom teaching of peer student-teachers.
- Preparation of case study of the internship school and the innovative activities that the school undertakes.
- Preparation of Lesson Plans and Unit Plans.
- Teaching the units of the prescribed syllabus in two subjects currently being taught in the school.
- Teaching as a substitute teacher.
- Mobilisation and development of teaching-learning resources.
- Preparation of a question papers and other assessment tools.
- Preparation of a diagnostic tests and organisation of remedial teaching.
- Undertake case study of a child.
- Undertake action research project on at least one problem area of schooling.
- Community work, community survey etc.
- Maintenance of a reflective diary or journal to record day to day happenings and reflections thereon.
- Writing a term paper on a selected theme.

THE INTERNSHIP IMPEDIMENTS

- **Lack of clear cut guidelines:** The new system came without giving prior training to the school personnels about the changed roles and responsibilities. Whether the schools will willingly accept or have to be persuaded to allow interns to practice for 16 weeks in the the schools. School staff has not been trained to handle this changed role by any competent authority.
- **Wrong Modeling:** The observation of school teachers in pre-internship phase gives a wrong modeling as majority of school teachers especially in government schools are still teaching with teacher centric approaches. The pupil teachers are thus not exposed to transformative pedagogies required to meet future demands especially with the implementation of NEP-2020.
- **Lack of Integration of theory and practice** is the biggest challenge is effective integration of theoretical knowledge and practice in teacher education curriculum. This lack of integration results in poor transfer of theoretical insights gained by student teachers into practice.
- **Insufficient periods allotted:** Some schools are reluctant to offer the requisite number of classes during five month period of practice teaching session (general feeling one comes across is that school discipline, normal classes, school test, timely completion of syllabus gets hampered. So the student teachers have to be satisfied with the allotted number of classes may be 1/2/3 days a week or two student teachers per week).
- **Mentor teachers are not oriented properly** by the schools heads and TEIs. The supervising teacher /teacher educator from the parent institute has to orient the Principal and faculty of the school about the school observation program, teaching practice and authentic assessment techniques. But generally they don't perform this duty because of i)lack of awareness ii) they are not spared by their college/university iii)don't attach importance to it iv) they think that student teachers have informed their mentors v)school principals and mentors are not interested in meeting them.
- **There is lack of interaction** of the teacher education institution and the faculty supervisor with the mentor teacher and the lab school in order to equip them with the necessary details for the organisation of internship.
- **Mentor teachers allotted from schools are not keen** in observing and improving the interns. The pedagogy teachers lose contact with the interns for majority of the time. School mentors just relieve themselves and avoid going to their classrooms even; leave aside the duty of mentoring. They guide student teachers to use teacher centered pedagogy to finish the syllabi. Whatever constructivist pedagogy has been taught in parent institutes is just not used by student teachers under the guidance of so called expert teachers/mentors.
- **Reduced supervision and guidance of teacher educators:** Internship schools are spread on a greater geographical circumference from the TEI and moreover the teacher educators are occupied in taking classes of other semesters. Thus they are not able to effectively supervise the interns. The purpose of the personal visit by assessors or supervisors is to assess a lesson which the student presents, to discuss it afterwards and to conduct an interview with the mentor teacher regarding the progress of the students (Marais 2010). Large enrollments and limited time for teacher educators to

visit student teachers during their teaching practice are inhibiting factors (Barone et al., 1996). Student teachers are left on their own in experimental field.

- **Schools treat the interns as additional teachers/helpers** and generally give them non-teaching duties/substitution duties-the teaching practice of interns is just an eyewash and wastage of time.
- **Lack of feedback by school mentors:** Feedback from peers and mentor teacher to student teachers offers basis for self reflection later on. Most of the mentors don't observe the lessons delivered by student teachers. Their knowledge is also not updated regarding the latest psychological or sociological underpinnings and effective teaching learning strategies. So they either don't give feed back because they haven't observed lessons or find themselves in an awkward position on how to give feedback. It is common observation that some mentor teachers hardly observe the process and give timely and requisite feedback (Bansal, 2018).
- **The need for 'authentic' assessment:** Teaching practice being essentially an experiential activity requires authentic assessment. Examples of such types of assessment include action research, portfolios, case studies and peer assessment. Teacher educators and School teachers or mentors are inexperienced in using these evaluative tools hence they need training in evaluating authentic assessment.
- **Use of ICT:** Teachers have to integrate ICTs in their teaching learning therefore teacher preparation program should encourage the use of technology in the teaching learning process. Most of the mentoring schools don't allow student teachers to use ICTs while many of the mentors themselves don't use computers for the teaching and discourage student teachers to make use of ICT in lesson planning and instruction delivery.
- **School culture and climate:** A positive school culture and climate of mentoring schools facilitates experiential learning and helps in fostering constructivist practices amongst teachers. Teaching practice is, essentially, an experiential learning process that provides contextual grounding to the realities and challenges of the classroom. When student teachers enter the real world as classroom teachers in mentoring schools, the school culture and climate may nurture or destroy their constructivist pedagogical beliefs. A supportive environment is indeed an important factor for engendering good teaching practices. On the other hand negative school climate and culture will be detrimental to mental health and social learning of student teachers.
- **Post internship adjustment problems:** The role of the student teacher from a teacher to student after the 5 month internship creates more adjustment problems in TEI. Most of the students and teacher educator's opinion is that after completion of internship, course should be completed, thus internship should be in the last semester of the programme.
- **New unhealthy trends** of dummy admissions, confusions over the content to be taught, questions, doubts and criticism on the curriculum prepared by various universities are main points of discussion in the community.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

It is indeed so easy to blame the system, no doubt the extended internship in the two year B.Ed Programme has brought about challenges for all the stake holders, but the policy is not to be held responsible, neither blame game can save the teacher education from sinking to the

bottom of the ocean. It won't be an overstatement that if necessary steps are not taken the future of teacher education is quite bleak and moreover the teachers who are being trained or more aptly saying untrained student teachers who are getting degrees in this new scenario have jeopardized the future of the nation. No programme or scheme can be successfully implemented, unless all the stakeholders at the very outset are perfectly clear about the objectives i.e. to prepare an "effective" teacher.

- Thus the two important players in the school internship programme for the student teachers are the mentor teacher in the school and the faculty supervisor in the college/department of teacher education.
- But need not be mentioned that the TEI has to sit on the driving seat and adopt measures to bring improvement and to generate utility from the increased span of school internship.
- The TEI should take initiative in organising interactive meetings/sessions prior to the internship phase to acquaint the school personnels about the nuances of the internship programme and the changed role of school principals/mentors.
- The teacher education institution to identify willful and competent teachers from the practice teaching schools as mentor teachers and give them intensive orientation regarding the roles and responsibilities of the mentor teacher
- The TEI can allocate specially trained staff for school internship which is relieved from other duties and regularly visits the internship schools to observe the interns.
- The faculty supervisor or the teacher education institute must orient/train the mentor teacher in the use of tools like rating scales, questionnaires, observation schedules etc. this will render objectivity and fairness in their assessment.
- The mentor teacher and faculty supervisor together are advised to design need-based and locally relevant activities for the student teachers.
- The teacher education institution and the faculty supervisor are also advised to have orientation cum-consultation meetings with the mentor teachers as well as the principals of lab schools on regular basis.
- The TEI should try to locate internship schools which can offer paid internship. Efforts can be made on a collective level by TEIs to convince government to make school internship as a paid venture. Monetary intervention will encourage all the stakeholders to assume responsibility with an enhanced vigour.

Change is inevitable law of nature and the Darwin's theory of "Survival of the fittest" will always hold good, soon the NEP 200 will be implemented, the TEIs have to be prepared to bring about qualitative changes and deliver the best to the society. School internship has to be improved if best results have to be harnessed from the changed scenario.

REFERENCES

1. Anees, S. (2022). Internship Program for B.Ed Trainees: A Handbook to School Observation. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 9(3).
2. Banu, R. & Maheshwari, R. (2019). Problems Faced by the Student-Teachers During Two year B.ed. Programme. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 6(6). Retrieved from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335095642>

3. Chakrabarty, P. (2016). Implementation of Internship in 2 Year B.Ed. Course – A Challenge or Routine Task. *IRA-International Journal of Education & Multidisciplinary Studies*. 3(3).
4. Gorain, R. (2017). Views of Teacher educators towards Two-year B.Ed. Programme of West Bengal. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4, (2), 95-98.
5. Jaseena, F. (2018). Reflections on school internship of two-year B.Ed programme-an analysis. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 4(11).
6. Jogan, S. (2019). Evaluating the Effectiveness of a School Internship. *International Journal for Social Studies*, 2 (50). *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 9(3).
7. Nithya, S. (2017) An Overview of Present B.Ed. Curriculum. *International Multidisciplinary e-Journal*, 6(4).
8. Rai, R.K. (2018). A Study of Internship Programme in Two Year B. Ed. Course *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 5(11).