

TEACHING PRACTICE IN SECONDARY TEACHER-TRAINING INSTITUTIONS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH-AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract

The quality of the teachers now a day is not up to the mark and it may be due to the lack of interest in teaching profession. People are more interested in money making whether it may be a job or a profession. In our country we are still emphasising on the access to education and comparatively lesser attention is paid to qualitative aspects, whereas quality is more important than the quantity. Quality education is related with the quality of educational institutions and in fact more on the teachers. Particularly focussing on the teacher training, it is the skill training in the teacher training programme that provides the real exposure and practical approach to curriculum transaction. Such programmes include Micro-Teaching, Simulation and Practice teaching. Especially in Himachal Pradesh we have good access to teacher training and everybody who wish to join the teacher training programme may easily manages and obtain the B.Ed. degree irrespective of their aptitude. It is the practice teaching only that provides real classroom experiences and prepares the student teachers for the profession. But there is large number of teacher training institutions in the state Himachal Pradesh and the schools become overcrowded by student teachers during teaching practice which results in the disorganisation of allotment of the classes to the student teachers. So, from this article the authors recommend some suggestions for the improvement of existing system of teaching practice with special reference to Himachal Pradesh.

Introduction

Education being the sub social system as well as social system of the society plays a key role in shaping moulding, reforming and reconstructing the society from to time. For this education has been recognised as the most potent instrument of social reformation and social transformation in the society. In our country we are still emphasising on the access to education and comparatively lesser attention is paid to qualitative aspects, whereas quality is more important than the quantity. Quality education is related with the quality of educational institutions and in fact more on the teachers (human resources). Our Hon'ble Prime Minister in 'The Tribune' Daily News paper dated 15-05-2009 stated that "we are facing big problem regarding the quality of teachers in different institutions of higher education". Quality of teachers mostly depends upon the quality of training and education they receive.

The quality of the teachers now a day is not up to the mark and it may be due to the lack of interest in teaching profession. People are more interested in money making whether it may be a job or a profession. We call teaching as a profession and not a job because a job is one which can be achieved with skills and the ability to work quickly and effectively in different situations and fields of life. The skills are not exclusively confined to the particular field e.g. a computer operator can work effectively and use his/her skills in schools, office, hospital, industry etc. But training in a particular field needs to be applied in a particular field or sector. Under this head we include teachers, doctors, engineers, advocates, and scientists etc. who have to work in a particular field or sector only. For this they are called as professionals.

So it is clear that teaching is not a job but a profession, so teacher should be trained in such away to provide him/her the best and enrich them with real experiences of the teaching-learning situations.

Secondary Teacher Education in Himachal Pradesh

There is large number of teacher training institutions in the state Himachal Pradesh. All the Colleges of Education within the territorial jurisdiction of Himachal Pradesh are affiliated to Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla. Except the University Department of Education and one Government College of Teacher Education i.e. located at Dharamshala (Kangra) all the others are self-financed. According to the curriculum prescribed for B.Ed. programme by Himachal Pradesh University every student has to pass the following courses:

1. Six compulsory course viz., Education in Emerging Indian Society, Development of Learner and Teaching-Learning Process, Development of Educational System in India, Essentials of Educational Technology, Education for Values, Environment and Human Rights and School Management

2. Any two of the teaching methodology course viz., Teaching of -- Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Social Sciences, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Home Science and Commerce.
3. Work Education and Work Experience (Theory)
4. Work Education and Work Experience (Practicum – Grade is to be awarded after internal evaluation)
5. Skill in Teaching (Two Subjects per Student – to be evaluated by external examiner)

The maximum marks for each paper is 100 (80 marks for theory+20 marks for Internal Assessment) except Work Education and Work Experience course. Fee structure of the B.Ed. course in private colleges under self-financing schemes is Rs. 39,600. Particularly focussing on the teacher training, it is the skill training in the teacher training programme that provides the real exposure and practical approach to curriculum transaction. Such programmes include Micro-Teaching, Simulation and Practice teaching. Especially in Himachal Pradesh we have good access to teacher training and everybody who wish to join the teacher training programme may easily manages and obtain the B.Ed. degree irrespective of their aptitude.

In curriculum we follow the guidelines of NCTE and H.P. University strictly but the transaction may differ. The curriculum comprises of the theory part and practical part. Practical part includes Micro-Teaching, Simulation and Practice teaching. Out of which practice teaching is the most important practical training and it may be because micro-teaching is done in the simulated way due to non-availability of the real classroom students. Hence, it is the practice teaching only that provides real classroom experiences and prepares the student teachers for the profession. Teacher educators unanimously agreed that the area of practice teaching was the most important part of the B.Ed. programme (Bhatia, 1987). The researchers have highlighted different issues pertaining to the practice teaching. Yadav (1980) conducted a critical study of Teacher Education in the State of Haryana and its comparison with that of CIE, Delhi and the RCE, Ajmer and concluded that demonstration schools were not helping the pupil-teachers in practice teaching, and the school teachers were kept aloof from this programme. Most of colleges did not pay proper attention to practice teaching. Srivastava (1982) in his study entitled effectiveness of the Teacher Education Programme found that there was little uniformity in organizing practice teaching in the various departments of the ten affiliated colleges of Avadh University. Mohanty (1984) in his study entitled a study of Student Teaching Programmes in Colleges of Education with special reference to innovation found that supervisors did not observe lessons completely. They rarely discussed their observations in lesson-plan journals with the trainees. Gogate (1985) in a study teacher-education in Marathwada-A Case Study Prepared for the Project, 'A Study of Regional Imbalance in Vocational Education and Manpower Planning in Marathwad' found that teacher trainees had to take practice lessons in schools. However, schools did not cooperate in practice teaching. Dash (1985) in an investigation into the Development of Teacher Education Programme in Orissa with reference to Motivation, Cost Structure and Quality concluded that inadequate physical facilities, inefficient teachers, and unsuitable practice teaching was reflected in the poor status of teacher-training programmes in the state.

Practice Teaching

Practice teaching occupies a key position in the programme of teacher education. It is a culminating experience in teacher preparation. It provides opportunity to beginning teachers to become socialized into the profession. Performance during practice teaching provides some basis for predicting the future success of the teacher. During practice teaching working with students in schools provides a high degree of emotional involvement of a mostly positive nature. Student teachers feel themselves grow through experience and they begin to link to a culture of teaching. During practice teaching, they feel engaged, challenged and even empowered. The term practice teaching has three major connotations: the practicing of teaching skills and acquisition of the role of a teacher; the whole range of experiences that students go through in schools; and the practical aspects of the course as distinct from theoretical studies. Practice teaching is the name of the preparation of student teachers for teaching by practical training. It is the practical use of teaching methods, teaching strategies, teaching principles, teaching techniques and practical training and practice/exercise of different activities of daily

school life. It is done in the schools compulsorily for thirty days in which each student teacher has to prepare and deliver 20 lessons in each of his/her methodology subject i.e. 40 lessons in all in the real classroom situation where each of the lesson delivered is to be observed by the teacher educator.

Purposes of Practice Teaching

The following purposes are to be fulfilled by Practice Teaching:

- To develop the ability to transfer theoretical knowledge of teaching practice into a practical one.
- To develop the ability to understand the mental level of school children.
- To develop qualities like self confidence, initiation of any work and use of available resources.
- To make student teachers' aware of different problems and circumstances of classroom so that they can be acquainted with the real classroom situations.
- To provide knowledge about various school activities like organising morning assembly, framing timetable and assigning projects.
- To foster the creativity of student teachers as they prepare different teaching aids and their use during teaching.
- To observe the lesson of his/her peers, critically, self-evaluate and get an opportunity to improve his/her teaching.
- To provide the prospective teachers with an opportunity of establishing an appropriate teacher pupil relationship.
- To provide with an opportunity to put theories into practice and to develop a deeper understanding of educational principles and their implication for learning.
- To enable the student teachers effectively to plan and prepare lessons.
- To develop desirable professional interests, attitudes and ideas relative to teaching profession.
- To provide an opportunity for self evaluation and to discover own strengths and weaknesses.
- To provide student teachers with an opportunity to have teaching evaluated and to gain from the benefits of constructive criticism.
- To develop skills in future teachers related to teaching like fluent speaking, meaningful reading, using blackboard and other teaching material.
- To provide for the exchange of ideas and methods between practicing school and teacher training institution, by teacher training institutions' staff and students, perceiving new ideas material and equipment in use in practicing schools and introducing new ideas, material and equipments into the school.

Thus, through practice teaching or real teaching student-teachers are able to acquire various teaching skills, become more confident and are aware of various classroom problems and their solution.

Procedure of Practice Teaching in Schools of Himachal Pradesh

In actual the above said purposes are fulfilled by following procedure:

The whole group of student teachers of an institution should be divided in small groups comprising of student teachers depending upon strength of pupils in the concerned/respective school. Every student teacher is expected to get two classes daily at least and expected to deliver two lessons each day in respective methodology subject and twenty lessons in each teaching subject i.e. total forty lessons in all. Each lesson should be planned well before the presentation/teaching in the classroom and teacher educator has to evaluate the lesson plan of student teacher well before its delivery in the classroom. The lesson plan should be evaluated

with respect to planning steps, task analysis and pedagogy and teacher educator should give feedback and suggestions at the end of each lesson in the written form.

During presentation checked lesson plan should be observed by the teacher educator and has to give suggestions/feedback to student teacher in the written as well as verbal form regarding the teaching methodology. Besides teaching each student teacher is also expected to observe ten lessons of other student teachers. Along with teaching learning activities student teachers should ensure their participation in the co-curricular activities of the school and also to acquire the knowledge of various types of records and registers.

General Problems of Practice Teaching and Suggestions for the Improvement in Himachal Pradesh

Allotment of schools: The distribution of the student teachers generally does not have any rationale. There is large number of teacher training institutions in the state Himachal Pradesh (77) and the schools become overcrowded by student teachers during teaching practices which results in the disorganisation of allotment of the classes to the student teachers. This problem can be sorted out by adding private schools for practice teaching. Further, authorities should go for quality in teacher training not for the quantity thereby not giving further recognitions so that number of teacher training institutions should not be increased further.

Lesson planning and evaluation: Lesson plans are generally not evaluated by teacher educator in advance before its presentation/teaching in the class and suggestions are not generally written regarding the task analysis and pedagogy because it will not be possible for a teacher to have a command on all the subjects i.e. sciences, humanities, commerce and languages since the group of student teachers for practice teaching comes from all the streams. Hence, most of teacher educators evaluate the steps and not the content and pedagogy of the lesson. So, there should be a provision for each student teacher to get his/her lesson plan checked and evaluated by subject expert before delivering it in the classroom. Further, In order to make the evaluation of teaching practice more effective, appropriateness of lesson, teaching methods, teaching aids, practical organization of lesson, interest of students and teachers and students' answers should be included in evaluation.

Time for Supervision: Each student teacher is given seven to eight minutes by the teacher educator for observing the lesson in classroom and in such small period of time the lesson cannot be evaluated properly and the observation sometimes ends in the introduction phase of the lesson plan only. This problem can be solved by increasing the number of days for practice teaching from thirty to sixty and number of teacher educators may be increased to two in each school.

Discipline: Teacher educator must ensure the attendance of student teachers with respect to in and out timing from the school so that student teachers may spend more time in the school and may involve in curricular as well as co curricular activities of the school also.

Involvement of School Resources: The teachers and the head of the school may be requested to join practice teaching programme for observation and giving valuable feedback and suggestions. Head of the school may be requested by teacher educator to allow the student teachers to observe the class of regular school teachers so as to reflect on the same. Material resources of the school may be used i.e. laboratories, library and TLM with the permission of head and the staff of the school to enrich the teaching learning activities. Teacher educator should facilitate in all the above.

Use of Technology: Most of the Government and Private schools in Himachal Pradesh have OHP's and computer resources. Student teacher may utilise these resources compulsorily to teach in one or the other way to make their teaching effective. It should be encouraged that student teachers make audio visual aids by themselves and student teachers should be given/provided guidance after every lesson.

Knowledge of Records and Registers and Time Table: Student teachers should also be provided with the knowledge of records and registers and time table to benefit them in the future. Participation in co-curricular activities of schools and maintenance of records each should also be ensured which is generally not practised.

Conclusion

Teaching practice is an activity, which can play an important role in the preparation of teachers. Its effectiveness is necessary for the nation. It is a milestone for professional adolescence. It is a combination of personality, professional skills, knowledge and training, which is fuel for an endless journey. Most of these responsibilities lie to the teacher educators and ensuring qualitative inputs. Nation expects much more from all of us so we should try to come up to their expectations by producing good teachers. Teaching practice helps to make competent and effective teachers. All the teacher's activities are directed towards the pupil's learning. These activities include lecturing, illustrating, interpreting and extrapolating etc. All these skills are best inculcated in student teachers during teaching practice. Therefore, teaching practice should be organised in such a way so that proper time and attention should be given to student teachers for their training and adaptation with school environment. The duration of teaching practice should be increased up to 12 weeks at least, so that practical training should be given for a quarter of the year.

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