Teaching Practice: Prevalent and Expected Performance Level of Prospective Teachers

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Abstract

Teaching practice is a key element of teacher training and mandatory skill of prospective teacher. This paper discusses the concept of teacher performance particularly of prospective teachers in their teaching practice. The data were collected through questionnaire from supervisors and cooperating teachers. The population of the study was taken from 16 teacher training institutions of nine public sector universities of Punjab province of Pakistan where teaching practice of MA Education programme was being conducted during session 2011-13. The paper analyses and discusses the prevalent performance level of prospective teachers and suggests the performance requisite for them. Moreover, it will contribute in the development of teaching practice and may open avenues to question the level of achievements of prospective teachers.

Keywords: Teaching practice, Performance, Prospective teachers.

Introduction

Teaching practice is a core element of teacher training. The term teaching practice covers all the experiences which prospective teachers get during their classroom teaching and within school environment.[1] It means the teaching practice provides practice environment which prospective teachers pass through to get experience of being teachers, the reality of which is profound and rich. It is also the core of teacher preparation on professional grounds because it gives the real interface between learner and professionally skilled teacher.[2]

Teaching practice provides real environment for teaching and learning to prospective teachers. Such real environment offers

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them the opportunities to learn how audio visual aids facilitate the teaching-learning process. The teaching aids provide practical experiences which help to understand the complexities of a subject. Teaching practice is an experiential and important part of teacher training, especially in developing countries including Pakistan. Such factors as geographical distance, unsteady experience of teaching, lack of resources and low quality of discipline in majority of teachers and students can decrease the effectiveness of teaching practice.[3] The prospective teachers usually face strange conditions like handling and supervising students and linking cooperation between the supervisors and cooperating teachers. The performance of prospective teachers during teaching practice are greatly influenced by such conditions and may ultimately affect their concept of the teaching profession. It may result in positive or negative terms for the professional development of the prospective teacher.

Many skills are required for teaching practice like making plans, imagining the situation, controlling, ingenuity, critical thinking, and making decision to solve the problems. By aiming to gain these skills, the prospective teacher has to learn by doing.[4] Among the core skills for teaching practice, the delivery of lesson, usage of audio-visual aids and management of classroom and student behavior are at the forefront.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the performance level of prospective teachers during teaching practice.
- To seek suggestions for improvement of teaching practice of prospective teachers.

Assessment of Prospective Teachers' Performance

The assessment of prospective teachers' performance in the teaching practice is vital in terms of evaluation of existing practices and clues for improvement of short comings. This assessment also enables the prospective teachers in becoming aware of their strengths and weaknesses and development of their professional capability.[5] The assessment usually takes place on certain dimensions. It is noted that the effective classroom management skill has largest impact on the students' achievement.[6] On the other hand, pedagogical skills are almost essential requirement in the teaching practice which is marked in the literature.[7] The knowledge of subject matter is a critical factor from every point of view in the teaching process: in planning, assessing and diagnosing, task setting,

questioning, explaining and giving feedback.[8] Moreover, prospective teachers are expected to plan their lesson appropriately. Good planning underpins flexibility and provides the teacher with structure and security.[9] Furthermore, the language of prospective teachers also plays critical role in their success which is used throughout in lesson planning and teaching to assessment. It is also noted that students learn through language and express their understanding of subject matter in language that forces the prospective teachers to employ appropriate language during their teaching practice.[10] Therefore, communication skills are also vital to assessment in teaching practice.

In this study, Prospective teacher performances (PTPs) are measured on the basis of four variables: lesson planning skills (LPS), classroom management skills (CMS), communication skills (CS) and pedagogical skills (PS). LPS and CS consist of 3 items while CMS and PS consist of 5 and 7 items respectively. Cooperating teachers (N=64) and Supervisors (N=64) rated all the items of the four dimensions of PTCs for their existing performance and proposed importance, on five point Likert scale. MANOVA was applied for supervisors as well as for cooperating teachers to find the difference between existing and proposed importance of four dimensions of PTCs. In the same way MANOVA was applied separately for both groups (Supervisors & Cooperating Teachers) to find the significant items and identify the critical areas of each of the four dimensions. Multivariate Eta- quareη2 was computed by SPSS to report the Effect size.[11]

Results

Table 1 presents the MANOVA results of importance of prospective teacher's performances (PTP) for cooperating teachers and supervisors. Existing and proposed importance given to PTC of teaching practice is the source of within group variation. The MANOVA results reveal that there was statistically significant difference in importance of PTC rated by both of the groups i.e. cooperating teachers ($F = 652.48$, $p < .05$) and supervisors ($F = 177.56$, $p < .05$) and concluded that the dimensions like LPS, CMS, CS and PS differ from each other in terms of existing and proposed importance.

Table 1: Prospective teachers' characteristics

ID	Variable	E		P		F-Test *	Effect size	Diff
		M	SD	M	SD			

LPS	Lesson Planning Skill	SUP	2.42	0.64	4.60	0.35	<.001	.818	E < P
		COP	2.11	0.37	4.60	0.32	<.001	.930	E < P
CMS	Class Room Management Skill	SUP	3.57	0.47	4.58	0.32	<.001	.618	E < P
		COP	3.21	0.49	4.49	0.35	<.001	.698	E < P
CS	Communication Skill	SUP	3.92	0.51	4.68	0.36	<.001	.426	E < P
		COP	3.48	0.56	4.58	0.33	<.001	.591	E < P
PS	Pedagogical Skill	SUP	3.07	0.42	4.44	0.34	<.001	.767	E < P
		COP	2.89	0.36	4.46	0.26	<.001	.866	E < P

* p<.05
M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation
E = Existing (Present)teaching practice; P = Proposed teaching practice
SUP = Supervisors; COP = Cooperating Teachers
The value of Wilks'Lambda (Multivariate test) was used as the F-ratio.

The post-hoc test (separate univariate ANOVAs that are done as a "step down analysis" after MANOVA) revealed that according to cooperating teachers, and in the same way supervisors, the four dimensions i.e. LPS, CMS, CS and PS were significant at the $p<.05$, it means that every dimension varies from other dimension. The finding indicates that cooperating teachers and supervisors gave higher scores to proposed importance of PTP. All the four dimensions i.e. LPS, CMS, CS and PS Scores were significant with large effect size (i.e. $\eta 2 \geq 0.14$) for both of the groups i.e. supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Each of the four dimensions (i.e. LPS, CMS, CS and PS) were further analyzed for both of the groups (i.e. cooperating teachers and supervisors) by applying MANOVA which shows that each item of all the four dimensions was significant ($p<.005$) and both groups gave higher scores to the proposed importance. Each dimension is discussed below with its items and their mean, SD and effect size to identify most critical items.

Lesson Planning Skills

The MANOVA results in Table 2 show that there was statistically significant difference in three items of LPS rated by both of the groups i.e. cooperating teachers ($F = 770.43$, $p < .05$) and supervisors ($F = 222.7$, $p < .05$) and concluded that all three items differ from each other on the basis of both group. All the three items of LPS were significant with large effect size (i.e. $\eta 2 \geq 0.14$) for both of the groups i.e. supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Table 2: Lesson planning skills

ID	Variable		E		P		F-Test *	Effect size	Diff
			M	SD	M	SD			
LPS-1	Plan and teach lessons according to prescribed format	SUP	4.13	0.58	4.77	0.43	<.001	.288	E < P
		COP	3.70	0.75	4.64	0.48	<.001	.360	E < P
LPS-2	Daily performance in lesson presentations	SUP	1.48	0.62	4.25	0.76	<.001	.803	E < P
		COP	1.41	0.50	4.53	0.50	<.001	.909	E < P
LPS-3	Performance in model lessons	SUP	1.66	1.34	4.78	0.45	<.001	.714	E < P
		COP	1.22	0.42	4.64	0.48	<.001	.936	E < P

* p<.05
M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation
E = Existing (Present)teaching practice; P = Proposed teaching practice
SUP = Supervisors; COP = Cooperating Teachers
The value of Wilks'Lambda (Multivariate test) was used as the F-ratio.

The table 2 shows that lesson planning skills are very poor in daily performance in lesson presentations and model lesson. While plan and teach lesson according to prescribed format is just one area where teaching practice have good reflection of skills.

Classroom Management Skills

The MANOVA results in Table 3 show that there was statistically significant difference in all the five items of CMS rated by both of the groups i.e. cooperating teachers ($F = 279.73$, $p < .05$) and supervisors ($F = 48.63$, $p < .05$) and concluded by applying post hoc test that five items differ from each other. All the five items of CMS were significant with large effect size (i.e. $\eta 2 \geq 0.14$) for both of the groups i.e. supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Table 3: Classroom management skills

ID	Variable		E		P		F-Test *	Effect size	Diff
			M	SD	M	SD			
CMS-1	Exhibits regular punctuality and attendance	SUP	4.45	0.64	4.92	0.27	<.001	.187	E < P
		COP	3.73	0.67	4.61	0.49	<.001	.359	E < P
CMS-2	Demonstrate effective classroom management	SUP	4.03	0.76	4.63	0.49	<.001	.181	E < P
		COP	3.75	0.64	4.42	0.59	<.001	.233	E < P

	skills								
CMS-3	Manage instructional time effectively	SUP	3.88	0.75	4.59	0.5	<.001	.247	E < P
		COP	3.66	0.96	4.45	0.56	<.001	.206	E < P
CMS-4	Coordinates regularly with peer teachers.	SUP	3.84	0.67	4.66	0.48	<.001	.330	E < P
		COP	3.55	0.92	4.44	0.61	<.001	.246	E < P
CMS-5	Maintaining classroom discipline	SUP	1.63	1.09	4.09	1.14	<.001	.555	E < P
		COP	1.34	0.48	4.55	0.50	<.001	.916	E < P

* p<.05
M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation
E = Existing (Present)teaching practice; P = Proposed teaching practice
SUP = Supervisors; COP = Cooperating Teachers
The value of Wilks'Lambda (Multivariate test) was used as the F-ratio.

The table 3 shows that except maintaining classroom discipline, all other items from CMS-1 to CMS-4 have been greatly practiced by the prospective teachers. In teaching practice, there should be greater attention towards the classroom discipline, so that prospective teachers can develop this professional capacity.

Communication Skill

The MANOVA results in Table 4 show that there was statistically significant difference for all the three items of CS rated by both of the groups i.e. cooperating teachers($F=60.42, p<.05$) and supervisors ($F=31.63$, $p<.05$) and also concluded from post hoc test that three items differ from one another. All the three items of CS were significant with large effect size (i.e. $\eta 2 \geq 0.14$) for both of the groups i.e. supervisors and cooperating teachers. All the characteristic items have significant presence in the existing teaching practice and proposed to increase their levels.

Table 4: Communication skills

ID	Variable		E		P		F-Test *	Effect size	Diff
			M	SD	M	SD			
CS-1	Having command over subject matter	SUP	3.70	0.85	4.7	0.46	<.001	.353	E < P
		COP	3.77	0.66	4.66	0.48	<.001	.377	E < P
CS-2	Demonstrate effective communication skills	SUP	3.94	0.69	4.61	0.58	<.001	.221	E < P
		COP	3.27	0.98	4.61	0.49	<.001	.433	E < P

CS-3	Prospective teachers respond on suggestions of supervisors /cooperating teachers promptly	SUP	4.63	0.72	4.72	0.45	<.001	.197	E < P
		COP	4.26	0.75	4.47	0.53	<.001	.396	E < P

* p<.05; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation
E = Existing (Present)teaching practice; P = Proposed teaching practice
SUP = Supervisors; COP = Cooperating Teachers
The value of Wilks' Lambda (Multivariate test) was used as the F-ratio.

Pedagogical Skill

The MANOVA results in Table 5 show that there was statistically significant difference for all the seven items of PS rated by both of the groups i.e. cooperating teachers (F=429.81, p<.05) and supervisors (F=84.30, p<.05). Six items of CMS i.e. PS-1, PS-3, PS-4, PS-5, PS-6 and PS-7 were significantly different from one another with large effect size (i.e. $\eta 2 \geq 0.14$) while only one item i.e. PS-2 was significant with medium effect size (i.e. $\eta 2 = 0.01$-0.06) for both of the groups i.e. supervisors and cooperating teachers.

Table 5: Pedagogical skills

ID	Variable		E		P		F-Test *	Effect size	Diff
			M	SD	M	SD			
PS-1	Availability and use of appropriate instructional technology	SUP	3.55	0.85	4.69	0.47	<.001	.411	E < P
		COP	3.36	0.90	4.55	0.50	<.001	.404	E < P
PS-2	Development and application of relevant AV Aids/teaching resources/materials to support lesson	SUP	3.61	1.23	4.06	0.92	.020	.042	E < P
		COP	3.67	1.22	4.16	1.09	.019	.043	E < P
PS-3	Appropriate use/application of pedagogical skills, methods and techniques	SUP	3.83	0.70	4.69	0.50	<.001	.335	E < P
		COP	3.41	0.66	4.59	0.50	<.001	.513	E < P
PS-4	Recognize own weaknesses and asks for support	SUP	3.50	0.93	4.39	0.49	<.001	.268	E < P
		COP	3.20	0.80	4.34	0.62	<.001	.391	E < P
PS-5	Apply new ideas of teaching in the classroom	SUP	4.02	0.68	4.72	0.52	<.001	.256	E < P
		COP	3.56	0.71	4.50	0.53	<.001	.361	E < P
PS-6	Command over pedagogy	SUP	1.55	1.27	4.61	0.55	<.001	.713	E < P
		COP	1.20	0.41	4.56	0.50	<.001	.933	E < P
PS-7	Performing and conducting co-curricular activities	SUP	1.42	0.50	3.91	1.42	<.001	.580	E < P
		COP	1.81	0.39	4.48	0.50	<.001	.899	E < P

* p<.05; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation
E = Existing (Present) teaching practice; P = Proposed teaching practice
SUP = Supervisors; COP = Cooperating Teachers
The value of Wilks' Lambda (Multivariate test) was used as the F-ratio.

The table shows that PS-6 command over pedagogy and PS-7 performing and conducting co-curricular activities are very poor in comparison to earlier PS-1 to PS-5 characteristic items. These need

to pay serious attention and should embed such practices that reflect strength in both areas.

Recommendations

This study found some of the critical areas which need to improve the existing teaching practice and its assessment. These are:

- Pedagogical skills are in poor conditions that need to improve in order to have command over pedagogy and organisation of co-curricular activities.
- Lesson planning should be improved in the presentation and modelling of the lessons.
- Classroom management skills should have improvement in maintaining the discipline of the classroom.
- Overall, lesson planning and pedagogical skills need to be seriously reflected upon the teaching practice and its assessment.

Conclusion

Teaching practice is a key element of teacher training and mandatory skill of prospective teacher. The teaching practice of prospective teachers is assessed against set of characteristics which are classified as lesson planning skills, classroom management skills, communication skills and pedagogical skills. The cooperating teachers and supervisors have observed that lesson planning and pedagogical skills have relatively poor presence in teaching practice than classroom management and communication skills. Although, all the sets of characteristics were greatly proposed for the teaching practice of prospective teachers. Firstly, in the set of lesson planning skills, daily performance in lesson presentations and performance in model lessons were very poor but the plan and teaching lesson according to prescribed format has significant manifestation in the teaching practice. Secondly, in the set of classroom management skills, all the characteristics such as punctuality and attendance, classroom management, management of instructional time and coordination with peer teachers have great reflection in teaching practice except the classroom discipline which is very poor there. Thirdly, all the characteristics of communication skills set were very high in the teaching practice. Finally, in pedagogical skills set, command over pedagogy and performing and conducting co-curricular activities were very poor in the teaching practice of prospective teachers. All the sets of skills and their characteristics were highly proposed for the assessment of teaching practice of prospective teachers.

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