

REFLECTIONS ON COMMON MISTAKES OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS DURING PRACTICUM

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Abstract

This paper examines the common mistakes of prospective teachers during practicum. Major objective of the paper was to study the common mistakes of prospective teachers during practicum. Quantitative data was collected through questionnaire from 800 prospective teachers and 80 prospective teachers (i.e 10% of total sample) were observed. Descriptive analysis was made to see the tendencies of the quantitative data and qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis approach. During practicum prospective teachers are provided with a chance to learn teaching skills. This paper explores how many prospective teachers were aware from their mistakes and attempt to overcome the shortcomings of delivery of lesson. Results revealed that majority of teachers experienced lack of confidence, start or end their lessons abruptly, failed to ensure student's participation in lesson and adopt authoritative behaviour with students. Majority of prospective teachers were aware about their mistakes and failed to view learning as an active process by ensuring students feedback.

Key words: Prospective Teachers, Reflective Practices, Professional Development, Common Mistakes, Teaching Practicum

1 Introduction

Vitality of professional development of prospective teachers has been acknowledged throughout the world. In Pakistani context all the educational policies shed light that the quality of teaching. Government of Pakistan has formally recognized that only professionally trained teachers can convert the raw talent of students into productive nation. State has taken a number of initiatives and various programmes have been started for the professional development of teachers. But the primary focus of all the educational policies remained to enhance the access to education (UNESCO, 2006). Many official documents reflected the state policy e. g report of National Commission on Education 1959 reflects "No system of education is better than its teachers". Specifically, National Education Policy, 1979 was concerned with governance and strengthening the structure of Teacher's Professional Development. National Education policy 1979 deputed an admission committee to select committed candidates. All the policy documents, reforms agendas and commission reports always had a serious concern with professional development of prospective teachers in Pakistan (Dash, 2010). Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan included four units on reflective practices to inculcate reflection skills among trainee teachers (Higher Education Commission, 2006). Reflective approach of professional development highlights that

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merely participation of teachers in academic programmes is not enough, rather they need to critically think and explore their classroom practices through peers, colleagues & student's feedback. Trainee teachers should be wise enough to profit from their student's feedback to identify and rectify their professional mistakes. The early recognition of role of reflective practices for professional development was recognized in the Socratic Method and Platonic Spiritual theory. This method is based on the analogy of self-questioning and self-dialogues (Brockbank & McGill, 2007). John Dewey (1933) and Donald Schon (1987) have conceptualized reflective practice as a lonely process, while Zeichner & Liston, 1996, Smyth, 1989; Langer & Amy Colton, 1991; Langer and Colton, 1993; Osterman & Kotkamp, 2004 and Ghye, 2011 have argued that reflective practice is not a lonely process; rather it's a social process to identify professional mistakes and gaps existing between theory and practice. Individual reflective practices include: self-reflection, reflection in action, reflection on actions (Schon, 1987) Whereas, contemporary researchers have considered that professional portfolios, logbooks, peers observation, colleagues feedback, students feedback, group discussions, seminars, mentoring, action research and reflective dialogue in the list of reflective practices (Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Collin & Karsenti 2011). Many researchers e.g Ferraro, 2000; Moon, 2003; Jasper, 2003; Sotto, 2004; Larrivee & Cooper, 2006; Dixie, 2009; Bolton, 2010; Roadman 2010; Ghaye, 2011; Brightside, 2012; Heather & Amy, 2012; Zeichner & Liston 2011; Amoh, 2011; Tice, 2011 and; Burniske, & Meibaum, 2012 have recognized following eight major areas of reflective practices namely (1) Reflection on action, (2) Reflection in action, (3) Reflection for action, (4) Reflection through audio-video recordings, (5) reflection through students feedback, (6) reflection through colleagues feedback, (7) reflection through peer observation and (8) reflection through professional portfolios. Being teaching practicum supervisor researcher developed an interest in the connotation of reflective practices and decided to question the common mistakes of prospective teachers during practicum.

2 Objectives of the study

This study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the common mistakes of prospective teachers during practicum.
2. To study the reasons of common mistakes during practicum.

3 Research Questions:

In view of objectives following research questions were formulated:

1. Which mistakes are committed by prospective teachers during practicum?
2. To what extent prospective teachers were aware about their own mistakes?
3. What the perceptions of prospective teachers about their own mistakes?

4 Literature Review

Traditional concept of practicum intricate that teachers are followers of institutional authorities, but contemporary concept of practicum demands reflections from trainee teachers. Trainee teachers should be capable to reflect on their professional experiences to

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identify their professional mistakes for sake of professional growth. In this regard the vision of the Government of Pakistan is very apparent. Recently four units on critical thinking and reflective practices have been included in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programme curriculum. Basic objective for this transition is to equip trainee teachers with reflection skills so that they may recognize their professional mistakes before they are recruited as professional teachers. This evolution aims to improve the quality of teachers training. Regretfully prospective teachers do not demonstrate reflection skills during practicum. This study aims to look at practices of prospective teachers to recognize their professional strengths and weaknesses.

Chye, (2008) has labeled three types of common mistakes of teachers; content related mistakes, presentation related mistakes and time management related mistakes. (i) Content related mistakes include: Too much or less focus on contents, absence of sequence in teaching of course contents, failure to clearly define the topic, anticlimax to assess previous knowledge of students, failure to assess previous competencies of students, quoting irrelevant & inappropriate examples during teaching, and failure to link various sections of the lesson. (ii) presentation related mistakes include: failure to attain student's attention in the beginning of lesson, inappropriate eye contact with students during lesson, failure to understand facial expressions & body language of students during teaching process, speaking very loudly or low velocity, attempts to make lesson too much difficult or too much easy for students, self-dialogue during presentation of lesson, jumbling and slipping of information during instructions, re-illustration of a theme already illustrated in the text or notes, inappropriate usage of AV Aids, failure to ensure visibility of white/black board to students, giving insufficient time to student to note down tables, pictures or diagrams, usage of difficult language and terms in the class, drawing inappropriate conclusions. (iii) Time management related mistakes include: failure to start lesson on time, cramming too much during the lesson, insufficient time to take students questions, and failure to manage time to review the major concepts taught in the lesson at the end (Ghye, 2008). Result of many studies (Lunzer & Pumfrey 1966, Hart 1981, Hart 1984, Tourniaire & Pulos 1985, Singh 1998) proportionally revealed that reasoning to identify own mistakes was very difficult task for majority of trainee teachers. However, identification of common errors and misconceptions affected their professional learning. Awareness about mistakes and misconceptions was the starting point for the effective teaching (Williams & Ryan 2000, Hadjidemetriou & Williams, 2001).

The connotation of reflective practices motivates teachers to ensure that they do not remain as mere consumers of professional knowledge but they should become reflective practitioners to produce professional knowledge (Shanmugam, 2009). In Pakistani context, Higher Education Commission and provincial ministries of education are periodically organizing short term as well as long term professional development programmes for in-service teachers. Regretfully mistakes of teachers are rarely discussed. Teacher Training Institutions should make concert efforts to equip teachers with academic knowledge and by helping them to build on their teaching on the findings of action research (Shanmugam, 2009). Teachers should actively explore their practices to identify own mistakes and to learn new teaching ideas. Teacher training institutions can play important role by providing a forum to trainee teachers to reflect on their own mistakes during seminars and conferences.

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Results the study of Mei, (2003) revealed that mistakes were indispensable for English language teachers and they identified reflective practices as a device to learn teaching. Mei (2003) has quoted the empirical evidences studied by (White et al, 1991; Carroll and Swain, 1993; Trahey and White, 1993) results of these studies exposed that trainee teachers acknowledge reflective practices as an effective tool to improve their grammatical mistakes. But this exercise demanded from English teachers to become more sensitive and get better awareness about the difficulties their students faced during learning process. Same article depicts a model for identification of teaching mistakes through following steps: identification of mistakes, definition and classification of mistakes, explanation of rules and exemplification. The study of Smith & Ingerrson (2004) shows that often trainee teachers do not feel adequately prepared for the challenges they may face in the practical classroom settings. They criticized teaching as an occupation during first year of teaching. Teachers reported that feel like a kin to a 'sink or swim,' 'trial by fire,' or 'boot camp' experience". Understanding of the experiences for prospective teachers during their initial induction into teaching profession is essential as the initial experience of teaching is a critical time for novice teachers and may determine their philosophy and attitude towards teaching for the rest of their professional lives (Kumic, 1993).

Reflective practice refers conscious thinking of teachers to trace the professional uncertainties and mistakes in the light of the situation they have already faced. The familiar situation works as an example to deal with the existing uncertainties (Schon 1983). Reflection refers paying critical attention to day to day events, professional theories, and the theories working behind the professional teaching actions (Bolton, 2010). Ghaye, (2011) has depicted four types of reflection; reflection in action, reflection on action, reflection for action and reflection with action. Reflection in Action and Reflection on Action are directly concerned with identification of mistakes. Peterson, 2000; Burniske & Meibaum, 2012 have mentioned that trainee teacher may identify their professional mistakes through their student's or colleague's feedback. Self-reflection over student's and colleagues feedback may liberate teachers to change their deficit based practices into professional strengths. Peterson, (2000); Ghaye, (2011) and Burniske & Meibaum, (2012) have viewed that it is difficult to assess the accuracy of the student's feedback. Muchinsky, (2003) has argued that peer feedback & observation are vital tools to identify teaching mistakes. Similarly, Erginel (2006) studied that microteaching, portfolios and reflective learning journals are best reflective practices trainee teachers to identify professional mistakes during practicum. Hativa & Goodyear maintained that teachers can recognize mistakes through strategic & epistemic reflection. Strategic reflection can be applied to generalize the knowledge; while, epistemic reflection refers to get cognitive awareness about mistakes committed during teaching process (Hativa & Goodyear, 2004). Peale, (2009) usually peers and colleagues appreciate each other and rarely help each other to identify professional teaching mistakes. Although peers and colleagues can play a vital role to identify professional mistakes, yet prospective teachers rarely get benefit from each other's feedback. Students are the best judge to identify professional mistakes of teachers Burniske ,& Meibaum, (2012) socioeconomic status and writing competencies directly affected student's abilities to reflect on their teachers mistakes. Student's feedback may be misinterpreted to identify teaching mistakes. Findings of the study of Burniske, & Meibaum, 2012 exposed that inconsistent correlation exists between student's feedback and improvement in teaching & learning environment. In the same way, the study of Ferguson, 2010 shows that students of one class may rate one teacher as excellent and few

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students from same class may rate a teacher as average. Usually, students do not understand teaching standards and classroom management techniques; although they can furnish a proper feedback on teacher's mistakes. Primary level students cannot differentiate between effective and ineffective teaching methods (Worrell & Kuterbach, 2001; Goe et al., 2008). It can be established that the earliest age of students to furnish feedback to teachers is unresolved yet. Students may feel vacillate to comment on their teacher's mistakes. In Pakistani context findings of the study of Hajira & Shamsa(2012) revealed that university teachers attempted to identify their mistakes through their student's feedback and attempted to develop good relations with students. Teachers may invite verbal or written feedback from their students to identify mistakes related to lesson planning or presentation.

5 Prospective Teachers in Pakistan

Prospective teachers in Pakistan experience an intricate transition from the teacher training institutions to real classrooms during practicum. They do not receive adequate support and attention from cooperating school teachers and school heads. Specific framework for cooperating schools to assist trainee teachers not exists yet. Prospective teachers solemnly assume the complete responsibilities for professional learning during practicum. Similarly many activities of prospective teachers are supposed to be carried out at their own potential. Since 2009, Higher Education Commission Pakistan in collaboration with USAID and many other donors putting serious efforts to invigorate the teaching practicum. In absence of adequate support, it is more likely that prospective teachers experiences teaching as frustrating, unrewarding and intolerably difficult which ultimately increasing the risk of becoming a casual professional. Government of Pakistan has recognized that professional trained teachers can play vital role to convert the raw talent of students into productive citizens. According to Unesco report (2006), Government of Pakistan has taken a number of initiatives to start various programmes for professional development of teachers. But primary focus of all the educational policies and plans developed in Pakistan remained to enhance the access to education (Unesco, 2006). Since 1947 Government of Pakistan has taken several measures for the professional development of teachers. Usually at the end of academic year feedback forms are distributed to the university and college students to reflect on their teacher's mistakes, but such practices rarely exist at school side. Precisely, during practicum student's feedback about the teaching mistakes of prospective teacher is largely ignored. Although, prospective teachers may identify and rectify their professional mistakes in the light of student's feedback provided by majority of their students. Head teachers, practicum supervisor and cooperating school teachers may indirectly inquire from students about the professional performance of trainee teachers performance at the end of practicum.

6 Importance of the study

This study is multifaceted attempt to understand the common mistakes of prospective teachers and focused to expose their self-efforts to identify most committed mistakes during practicum. This study designates self-views of prospective teachers about their own common mistakes in practicum context. Researcher has focused to study the reflection of prospective teachers about common mistakes related to classroom management, delivery of lesson, mistakes related to relationship with students and failures to understand student's individual differences. Therefore, in national and international context findings of this research can contribute mainly it will

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provide prior exposure to the trainee teachers to avoid mistakes during practicum. Similarly, findings of this study may help outtraine teachers to get benefits from student's feedback and understand the limitations. Findings of the study may support head teachers, cooperating school teachers and practicum supervisors to understand common mistakes of trainee teachers and take some preventative measures to address the common mistakes of trainee teachers. Lastly, findings of the study may helpful for the teacher educators, head of departments, principals, administrators and curriculum designers, guiding them to include material about common mistakes in teacher education curriculum. In international context findings of the study may contribute to the theoretical literature about common mistakes of prospective teachers.

7 Methodology

Study based on mixed method design approach. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 800 prospective teachers during practicum. Population of the study comprised of male and female prospective teachers enrolled in B.Ed programme during 2012- 2013 at teacher training colleges, institutes and universities department of education of federal capital territory and Punjab province of Pakistan. In Pakistan almost 284 teacher training colleges/institutes are imparting teacher education. In addition there are 135 universities, 26 universities are having department of education. Study was conducted at 9 teacher training colleges/institutes (5 universities department of education and 4 teacher training colleges). Universal sampling technique was applied to select the sample to collect quantitative data. The actual number of respondents of the study was 910 (female=650 male=150), however overall 800 prospective teachers returned the questionnaire. Percentage wise distribution of sample was male 18.8% and female 81.2%. It can be established that majority of the respondents were female by size of enrollment in B.Ed programme. The response rate was 87.91%. To ensure compatibility between qualitative and quantitative 10 of sample (i.e 80 prospective teachers) were observed. Convergent Parallel Design was followed to collect both types of data. This design allows researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively and make separate analysis of both types of the data. The major strength of this design is that it combines the advantages of each type of data. Quantitative data provides for generalizability, while qualitative data offers information about the context or settings (Cresswell, 2011). Age group wise distribution of respondents was as under:

Table 1: Age Groups of the Respondents

Prospective Teachers					
<i>Age group</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Age group</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Below 20 years	89	11.1%	31-35 years	13	1.6%
20-25 years	536	67.0%	Above 35 years	01	1%
26-30 years	120	15.0%	No Answer about age	41	5.1%
					N=800

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Majority of prospective teachers (67%) were 20 to 25 years old. It can be established that majority of respondents formed a young group. While, 11.1% were less than 20 years old. Similarly 15% were belonging to middle age group. 1.6% was 31 to 45 years old. While only 1% respondents were belonging to above 35 years age group. Whereas, (5.1%) prospective teachers provided no answer about their age group.

Table 2: Academic and Professional Qualifications of the Respondents

Academic Qualification			Professional Qualification		
<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
BS	35	4.4%	PTC	42	5.2%
BA/B.Sc	515	64.4%	CT	56	7.0%
MA/M.Sc	239	29.9%	ATTC	16	2.0%
MS/M.Phil	11	1.4%	DIE	73	9.1%
	N=800	100%	No Professional Qualification	613	76.6%
BS= Bachelor Studies	BA/B.Sc= Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Sciences	MA/M.Sc= Master of Arts/ Master of Sciences	PTC= primary teaching certificate	DIE=Diploma in Education	ATTC= Arabic Teaching Training Certificate
			CT=certificate in teaching		

4.4% respondents were having BS qualification, 64.4% were bachelor degree holders, 29.9% were having master level qualification.. While only 1.4% respondents were having 18 years education before they got admission to B.Ed programme. Likewise (76.6%) prospective teachers were having no professional qualification before they joined B.Ed programme, 5.2% were having PTC, 7% were having CT, 2% had completed Arabic Teaching Training Certificate prior to their enrollment in B.Ed programme. 9.1% completed Diploma in Education before their enrollment in B.Ed programme. It can be established that majority of respondents were simply graduate and not having no professional qualification before they joined Bachelor of Education programme.

Results

Table 1: Common mistakes of Prospective Teachers During Teaching Practicum

<i>Sr.</i>	<i>Common Mistakes</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>
1	Lack of confidence	Yes	328	41%	1.59	.492
		No	472	59%		
2	Lack of knowledge	Yes	427	53%	1.47	.499

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	about teaching methods	No	373	47%		
3	Fear to maintain discipline in class	Yes	335	44%	1.58	.493
		No	465	68%		
4	Language conflict with body language	Yes	288	36%	1.64	.480
		No	512	64%		
5	Improper start of lesson	Yes	327	41%	1.59	.491
		No	473	59%		
6	Improper end of lesson	Yes	334	42%	1.58	.493
		No	466	68%		
7	Failure to ensure students participation	Yes	335	42%	1.64	.491
		No	465	58%		
8	Failure to take student feedback	Yes	335	42%	1.84	.360
		No	465	58%		
9	Not discuss classroom problems with seniors	Yes	241	30%	1.70	.459
		No	559	70%		
10	Improper usage of Audio Visual Aids	Yes	252	32%	1.68	.464
		No	548	68%		
11	No mistake	Yes	37	5%	1.95	.210
		No	763	95%		
12	No answer	Yes	87	11%	1.89	.311
		No	713	89%		
13	Not understand students domestic problems	Yes	59	7%	1.92	.261
		No	741	92%		
N=800						

Quantitative data shows that 41% PTs experienced lack of confidence during initial exposure to the classroom during practicum. While 51% trainee teacher's maintained their confidence. Mean value 1.59 indicated that majority of prospective teacher were feeling confident. It can be established here that almost 40% prospective teachers lose confidence during initial classes. 53% replied that they were having less knowledge about application of various teaching methods during practicum, 44% replied that they were afraid to maintain classroom discipline, 36% stated that they experienced conflict between their language and body language, 41% replied that they could not start and end their lesson properly, 42% replied that they failed to ensure students participation and to take students

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feedback during early days of teaching, 70% seldom discussed classroom related problems with senior teachers, 07% reported that they failed to understand students' domestic problems during teaching practicum. While 5% answered that they did not committed anymistake and 11% PTs provided no answer about their common mistakes. 41% started their lesson in improper way.

8 Discussions

The need for an open-minded disposition thus assumes increased significance as student teachers“ engage in reflective discourse to better understand and improve their own teaching. Engagement of prospective teachers in a controlled environment of on-campus teaching their teacher behaviour can be observed and scrutinized both by themselves and by their students, formal written feedback and focused discussions with students provide an emerging evidence base, which enables prospective teachers to think about their practice in ways designed to promote their subsequent teaching (Mayers, 2009). Similarly finings of this study showed that majority of prospective teachers designed their lesson in the light of their student's feedback. Prospective teachers acknowledged that students feedback lead them to know the strengths and weakness of their own teaching. Results of the study of Egrinle (2006) revealed that pre-service teachers regarded self-awareness as fundamental quality which was developed through the reflective practicum course. Teachers emphasized that they developed awareness towards their own actions through videotaping of lessons, microteaching assignments, reflective journals, students feedback and through peer feedback (Erginel, 2006). Results of this study revealed that majority of prospective teachers agreed that they can identify and rectify their mistakes through student's feedback. Teachers may examine their belief's structure regarding education and engagement of their students in an ongoing process of diagnosis, with self andwith learners, including observation, questioning, obtaining evaluative feedback, and critical reflection. This process of cultivating self-awareness and determining motives for classroom policies is particularly valuable for those teachers seeking to defuse or avoid volatile or merely disruptive situations (Spiller, 2011). The correlation between students' results and rating remained widely inconsistent. Proper usage of students' feedback may enable teacher to improve their teaching and learning environment (Burniske, & Meibaum, 2012). Results of the study of Hajira & Shamsa (2012) revealed that university teachers made their self-evaluation after receiving the feedback from their students. University teachers attempt to understand the problems of their students and attempt tohave good relations with their students.

Results of the study of Mayer (2006) revealed that prospective teachers were encouraged to reflect on feedback gathered from students as soon as possible after the event so as to capture key events and occurrences in relation to their research investigation. Students feedback enable them to triangulate data and refer in order to reflect on their practices and plan how they might improve the effectiveness of their teaching (Mayers, 2009). Similarly results of this shows that students feedback leads teachers to look into their practices for sake of improvement.

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