

School Internship Programme

An Analytical Review

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Abstract

Internships, in general, are becoming a widely used programme for students' experiential learning and it help to fill the gap between the theory learnt and its application in classroom situation. There are different studies conducted in India and abroad about the implementation of school internship programmes as a part of pre-service teacher education programme. The present study is an attempt to review the various studies conducted in this area focusing on the findings and recommendations. Internships have been associated with many benefits for stakeholders, including the student-teachers, schools and other professionals. Internships provide a variety of opportunities for student-teachers to transfer theoretical knowledge to a practical setting.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are one of the important resources of education system. The quality of teacher is directly correlated with the quality of learning and hence the quality of schooling. Henard and Leprince, (2008), argued that the quality of education cannot be higher than the quality of its teachers. Therefore, for imparting quality education, each level of education requires well trained and qualified teachers. According to

UNESCO (2006), teacher quality covers a number of areas such as knowledge, skills, competency, motivation and effectiveness of lesson delivery in the classroom which could be acquired through theory and practice.

Huang and Lin (2014) and Voss and Gruber (2006) support the view that important attributes for teachers are content knowledge expertise, communication skills, humour, friendliness, teaching skills and enthusiasm. While some of the

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important attributes are arguably inborn, a good number of them are acquired during teachers' training. For a teacher to possess these critical attributes, a pre-service teacher preparation programme must emphasise on both— theoretical and practical aspects. Most of the pre-service teacher education programmes offered by different institutions across the world do this by providing practical exposure to the student-teachers in the school and classroom processes. This is commonly known as school internship or practice teaching.

INTERNSHIP AS A MANDATORY COMPONENT OF PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMME

Not only teaching profession but also other professions such as Medicine, Pharmaceuticals, Nursing, Management, Law and Engineering also have the concept of internship Programme for the completion of degree or course. Every professional course should prepare students in such a way that they understand the practical aspect of that particular profession and internship is a necessary tool to sharpen the students' skills (Volante and Fazio, 2007). To get mastery in a particular area, one needs to have enough practice and internship is a medium for students to indulge in the practice of that profession. Students will gain hands-on practical experience in their chosen area (Loughran, 2015 and Lubell et al., 2017).

According to Sweitzer and King (2013), during internship, students have the opportunity to develop, apply the skills, and practice theories and concepts learned in the classroom. The ability to develop and learn professional skills that promote growth and development while at the same time gaining industry-specific and often technological skills related to their field is valuable.

They also highlighted that through internships, the students forge important professional connections even before passing their degree. For many students, internship is a stepping stone to get additional opportunities for their professional career.

SCHOOL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

School Internship Programme is a culminating experience which develops prospective teachers as a reflective practitioner. School internship plays a crucial role in student-teachers' professional development. It provides the student-teachers, a platform for integrating theory they learnt to the real classroom situation and begin to utilise their knowledge of researches (Adusei et al., 2016 and Asaya, 2010) on teaching and learning. It consists of full-time work in a school to gain intensive experience in planning, teaching, engaging in other school activities, preparing instructional support materials and performing all those duties that a regular teacher is expected to do (NCERT, 2017).

Teaching internship provides student-teachers an opportunity to engage in critical reflection as they create meaning out of their experiences and attempt to discover their identities as teachers. It provides student-teachers with the foundation necessary for continued professional growth and development. Student-teachers learn to tackle multicultural environment and enhance their professional skills (Mapuranga and Bukaliya, 2014).

According to Stretch and Harp (1991), internship is supervised off-campus workplace learning experience, which earns academic credit. Internships give students the opportunities to apply and extend the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom to practical experiences, while also allowing them opportunities to view and evaluate careers to which their academic interests may lead. Ideal internships establish positive contacts with prospective employers and are key to building professional networks for students.

The main aim of internship is to enable the intern to convert what was learnt as theory into practice. During internship, a student-teacher is in a very complicated situation operating at two levels to adjust to life as a student, under the control of mentors and supervisors, and also life as a teacher, managing their class (Koerner et al., 2002). Lunenberg, Dengerink, and Korthagen (2014), also noted that the teacher trainees struggle with their work as student

and as a student-teacher during internship at the same time and what they experience as learners of teaching can have far reaching consequences on their future career. Msiska, and Salik, (2016) also attest to the important role of internship by indicating that practicum experiences among pre-service teachers are often described as the most important part of the teacher education program.

IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

School internship or practice teaching is important as it also helps the prospective teachers to acquire teaching skills. Just as it occurs in other professions, a trainee teacher needs practice teaching in addition to theory in order to perform efficiently and effectively (Leonard, Halford, and Bruce, 2016). Student internship programme has great importance in the field of teacher education. There are a number of studies which prove its relevance in the professional skill development of the students.

Le HuuNghia, and Ngoc Tai's (2017) article reported the analysis of two pre-service teachers' narratives to highlight the process of development as a teacher during their teaching internship. The analysis showed that their identity as a teacher had been shaped before they entered the teacher education programme, where it continued to be shaped by the educational experts. In that way, they formed the expectations or imaginations of their professional

roles and responsibilities prior to the teaching internships. Benton (1990) also supported that before entering teaching internship, student-teachers had pre-existing expectations or imaginations, which were challenged by the reality they faced. Their engagement with the internship, resilience and negotiations of professional practices were found to be significant for the development of their professional competence as a teacher.

The study by Osei-Owusu et al. (2013) revealed that practical preparation of mentee for teaching, and innovative strategies to solve the challenges faced by the programme, will positively affect teachers' practical preparation for the internship programme. They suggested that partnership schools should be more accessible to the mentee and the supervisor and the government should subsidise the cost involved in undertaking the programme. The need for providing regular mentorship training to mentor teachers and the necessity of collaboration between the university and partnership schools for quality in school internship are some of the other areas that they highlighted. Parveen and Mirza (2012) found that internship gives an opportunity to the student-teachers to integrate theory and practice, plan and deliver lessons properly, critically analyse their own and peers' teaching styles and the feedback given by supervisors were beneficial to them.

Bukaliya (2012) spotted the benefits and challenges faced by student interns at the Zimbabwe Open University through a mixed method study and revealed that internships are beneficial in as far as they provide interns with hands-on practical experience and exposure. The findings also highlighted that internship helps to boost the motivational level of student interns and to understand the theories learnt in classroom. Some of the shortcomings that they highlighted are difficult to get organisations where they can undertake their internship and shorter duration of the internship.

Project by Jackel Daniel (2011) aims to examine the students' internship experience and determine whether it helped to enhance his or her ability to achieve the predicted outcomes of the internship programme. The researcher identified the factors, the number of hours worked weekly at the internship, prior training received, and the availability of the internship coordinator as the reliable predictors of student-teacher development as a teacher.

Beard (1998) emphasised that the internships contribute significantly and positively towards enhancing the motivational level and develops the student professionally before entry into the marketplace.

Griffin (1997) attempted to develop the long-term inclination towards reflection in nine student-teachers. This long term exposure

resulted in making them to become practicing reflective teachers who were aware of their own thinking and valued reflection as something they did for their own self-understanding and improvement. Mansvelder-Longayroux et al. (2007), analysed the nature of reflection in the portfolios of student teachers. It was found that the student teachers tended to focus on their practical experience. They examined what they had done and learned, in what aspects they had made progress, and they formulated plans for the future.

Guihane (2009) aimed to study the current trends and practices of teacher training institutes and to know the perception of student-teachers towards cooperating schools with respect to different aspects of practice teaching during the internship programme. It reported that almost all the student and teacher educators felt that teacher training cannot become more effective unless the cooperative school teachers become active partners in the internship programme. Study also reveals that the climate of cooperative schools is not healthy for the student-teachers to achieve the goals of internship and teacher education programme.

Amer and Ismail (2014) evaluated the internship programme at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) from both student-teachers and supervisors' perspectives and found that student-teachers have a clear viewpoint on the objectives of internship programme. The study also reveals that student-

teachers shows satisfactory feedback for supervisors support in solving problems, frequency of their visits, and delivery of information.

Olaitan and Agusiobo (1981) explained that practice teaching is an experience of guided teaching in which the student-teacher assumes increasing responsibility for directing the learning of a group of pupils over a specific period of time with the support of teacher educators.

SCHOOL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME IN INDIAN CONTEXT

In India, the NCTE Regulations, 2009, made an attempt to broaden the scope of practice teaching by emphasising the importance of providing the experience of all activities and programmes of the school to the student-teachers. The NCTE Regulations, 2014, have stipulated further strengthening of the component of 'Field Engagement' by prescribing a longer duration of 20 weeks for it in the elementary and secondary teacher education programmes like D.El.Ed., B.El.Ed., B.Ed, B.A. B.Ed., and B.Sc. B.Ed. and B.Ed. M.Ed. The 'Field Engagement' of 20 weeks has been further split into two parts consisting of four weeks and sixteen weeks to be organised in the first and second year of the two-years programme, and in the second, third and fourth year of the four-year programme. The engagement of 16 weeks' duration is further split into 14 weeks of school internship and two weeks of

engagement with a field other than the school (i.e. community engagement).

Marie Jedemark (2019) formulated a study through the observations of internship at various schools. This study took a critical approach for assessment of dialogues during practical, school based teacher education programme. The result is based on 13 assessments conducted in a course at a Swedish university, where one of the course objectives is to, 'in a scientific way, analyse the teaching situations based on learning theories'. The assessments were analysed, drawing from Bernstein's concepts of classification, framing, horizontal knowledge and vertical knowledge. It found that the quality of practice teaching has failed to create enthusiasm and learning interest among the students because of the lack of clarity and proper planning. Non-cooperation of the experimental schools also affects the quality of teaching practice. It was suggested by the researcher that the goal of true education can be achieved only through the conduction of good orientation programme, guidance, supervision, evaluation, feedback and improvement programmes. The study also highlighted the importance of sound relationship between teacher educator and student-teacher and between teacher education institution and experimental schools for quality improvement in practice teaching.

Chennat (2014) argued for a step-by-step progression in the guidance of student- teachers during internship.

The internship should start with the free and unguided observation of classroom transactions and other school activities followed with guided observations. Student-teachers have to be in their respective subject groups tied to a host teacher of the school from the same discipline, as mentors, to ensure meaningful scaffolding. They are to be supported in their teaching by the host teachers, who would be observing their classes, guiding and supporting them in all ways including resource management, classroom management, content enrichment and improving the pedagogic strategies.

DISCUSSIONS

School Internship intends to link the theoretical knowledge learnt to the practical experiences in the real situation. The difference between a professional and a non-professional teacher is School Internship Programme and the experiences gained during the internship. It is said that practice makes a man perfect; in the case of school internship, the student teachers are getting more and more practical exposure and that makes them an effective teacher. It will also help them to understand their strengths and weaknesses, by which the student-teachers learn to use their strengths and to work on their weaknesses. Internship is a stepping stone in the working field and it is going to have a long lasting impact on the performance

of students in their future professional life.

It is found that internship is beneficial in bridging the gap between classroom learning and professional practice (Kuh, 2008), and it also provides the opportunity to solidify the knowledge learned in the classroom (Sattler, 2011). It makes the students develop an awareness of their professional values. Internship will create opportunities for career exploration and job-related skill development (Sattler, 2011). Internship enhances the realistic workplace understanding (Knouse and Fontenot, 2008). Some of the studies by Griffin (1999) and Mansvelder-Longayroux et al. (2007), highlight the importance of reflective practices of student-teachers during their internship. The reflection of various activities in terms of what happened, what went good, what went wrong and what more is required for further improvement, are crucial in the process of becoming a reflective practitioner.

The internship should not be seen as an independent process and the success of internship depends on the support and mentoring of teachers and teacher educators [Amerand Ismail (2014), Osei-Owusu, et al. (2013), and Olaitan and Agusiobo (1981)]. Few studies have highlighted the importance of the accessibility of an internship school and its cooperation with the teacher

education institution. Carpenter and Blance (2007) found that the non-cooperation of internship school is the biggest challenge for successful completion of the internship programme.

CONCLUSION

Teaching as a profession requires professional orientation. The orientation can be done through lecturing and demonstration. But when it comes to the field of a professional course, orientation requires hands-on exposure. Both the theory without practice and practice without theory leads to unprofessionalism. Hence, a happy combination of theory integrated with practical experiences is essential to prepare an effective professional. Merely by increasing the duration of practical experiences in a course also, will not help to develop an effective professional. The relationship between a student-teacher, mentor teacher and teacher educators, the feedback provided to student-teachers by the mentor and teacher educators, the cooperation of internship schools, orienting the school teachers for effective mentoring and orienting student-teachers for the preparation of reflective notes are crucial components of a school internship programme. The teacher education institutions, while planning for the school internship programmes, needs to consider all the above mentioned factors.

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