

Learning and Practicing of Innovative Pedagogical Skills of Prospective Teachers' In Teaching Practicum At B. ED (Hons) Elementary Program

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Abstract

Pedagogical support for prospective teachers play fundamental role in pre-service teacher education program. The present study was designed to explore existing practices of university tutors and cooperative teachers in providing pedagogical support for prospective teachers during teaching practicum at B. Ed (Hons) elementary program. It is an exploratory cum-descriptive study following quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect the data. The study found contradictions between the perceptions of cooperative and prospective teachers. They did not agree on providing guidance in planning lessons, designing lesson activities, managing classroom discipline, practicing latest techniques, providing feedback and reflection on lesson etc. University tutors and cooperative teachers both tried to provide guideline to prospective teachers during teaching practicum but it was difficult for cooperative teachers to touch all the components of innovative pedagogical practices without proper training. Teaching practicum for prospective teachers was quite an experience to explore to what teaching is all about in real life situations. Prospective teachers learnt a lot from this experience but they need proper guidance from all relevant parties to learn how to teach with its original spirit.

Keywords: Cooperative teachers; mentors; pedagogical support; prospective teachers; teacher education program

Introduction

Innovative Pedagogical skills are essential to support and maintain successful teaching at all levels. In this era of digital technology, there are transformational changes in a learner's life. They have access on all powerful devices of knowledge without constraints of school and classroom boundaries. These digital technologies provide base for innovative pedagogy. Innovative pedagogical skills are using videos, games and hands on activities in teaching. Preparation of future teachers to develop innovative pedagogical skills through pre-service teacher training programs has got more attention in all over the world(Bryan & Abell, 1999). Main purpose of teacher education program is to create

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trained prospective teachers so that they perform their duties well in future. Pre-service teacher education program is the combination of course work with the strong foundations of field work to make a powerful connection between theory and practice Prospective teachers learn innovative pedagogical skills to develop their capabilities during teaching practicum to improve quality of teaching in the classroom (A. A. Malik, 2015).

Many educationists used the term Pedagogical Knowledge to facilitate their students learning and enhance their understanding by using different teaching strategies in teaching (Carr & Kemmis, 2003). Shulman (1987) First time differentiated pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. He defined pedagogical content knowledge as explanation, interpretation and transformation of content knowledge of different subject. Pedagogical knowledge is the combination of teaching skills and strategies used by teachers in the class room.

Pedagogical content knowledge is a combination of specific teaching strategies related to specific content (Shulman, 1987). Content related to teaching strategies provide better understanding to students about lesson. During teaching practicum, it is essential to have pedagogical knowledge for cooperative teachers to provide guidance and assistance to prospective teachers for their professional development. Pedagogical knowledge is the key of success in the teaching practicum (Hudson*, 2004).

In Pakistan, pre-service teaching training programs are often criticized by educational experts for not providing innovative pedagogical skills. Therefore, they use traditional pedagogy which negate actual purpose of teacher's training throughout practicum (Khalid, 1974). It's also mentioned in the document of National Professional Standards for teachers in Pakistan (2009) that teacher education programs are not producing quality teachers. Unfortunately, quality of teachers in Pakistan is not satisfactory as stated in the New Education Policy (2009) that "poor quality of teachers in the system in a large number is owed to the transformations in governance, an obsolete pre-service training structure and a less than adequate training command (O. R. Malik & Kotabe, 2009)

Prospective teachers' attitude towards learning and teaching innovative pedagogical skills in education is a key aspect in improving the quality of education (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2011). In Pakistan, pre-service teachers training is relatively ineffective as it did not address the contextual realities and situational needs of the prospective teachers ((A. A. Malik, 2015). Mentoring through co-operative teachers in pre-

service teacher education is an important element that plays a vital role in the professional development of prospective teachers.

Learning innovative pedagogical skills from co-operative teachers and university tutors through mentoring is common practice in Pakistan during teaching practicum. Mentoring is important factor of pre-service teacher education in which pedagogical support has been provided to prospective teacher during teaching practicum. Co-operative teachers and university tutors play the job of mentors (A. A. Malik, 2015).

University tutors and co-operative teachers play significance in shaping the attitude of prospective teachers towards innovation and practicing latest pedagogical skills. With this background, I designed this study to investigate existing practices of university tutors and co-operative teachers to facilitate prospective teachers in Learning and practicing of innovative pedagogical skills at teaching practicum for their professional development. The problem to be examine was the existing situation of Learning and practicing of innovative pedagogical skills of Prospective teachers' in teaching practicum at B. ED (Hons) elementary program, it brought forward understanding that how prospective teachers acquire knowledge to work with co-operative teachers. This study may help to improve the pedagogical aspect of teacher education in Pakistan, as it will provide in-depth insight about real situation. It will also help to bridge the gap between theory and practice for prospective teachers. University teachers and co-operative teachers may learn how mentor prospective teachers during teaching practicum.

Research Question

1. How do Co-operative teachers and University tutors mentor prospective teachers' in learning and practicing innovative pedagogical skills?

Literature Review

Literature review discusses prior writings about pre-service teacher education

Pre-service Teacher education program

Pre-service teaching is a process of providing guidelines, to enhance prospective teacher's efficiency and to acquire new knowledge and skills. Pre-service teacher education programs include content knowledge, professional education and teaching practice. During teaching practice, prospective teachers are provided opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge into practice. The institutions of pre-service education introduce their students into teaching by teaching practicum and provide support through cooperative teachers. Prospective teachers begin their pre-service teaching career by observing cooperative teacher and complete it as a competent professional (Roness, 2011)

Mentoring plays a fundamental role as a changing agent in the pre-service teacher education program but it requires proper planning from universities and schools, where cooperative teachers guide the prospective teachers more effectively. Brock and Grady (1998) concluded that Mentoring in pre-service teacher education is a vehicle in prospective teachers' preparation and understanding of how to learn and practice effectively with the help of cooperative teachers. Mentoring process need to be done extensively, affectively and systematically during teaching practicum to achieve the best results in the form of improved performance.

Mentoring is a process of interpersonal relationship between cooperative and prospective teachers which has equal importance and has valuable impacts on both in all aspect sand for effective mentoring this impact must be positive. It is essential that cooperative and prospective teachers must know about the interconnectivity of their roles and how to interact in Mentoring (Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

Collaborative partnership is needed between universities and schools for the successful professional development of prospective teachers. Poor communication creates many problems for prospective teachers. Many researchers emphasize on partnership and communication between schools and universities as (Crutcher & Naseem, 2016) stated in an article that "if there is no collaboration between school administration, school staff, mentors and teacher education programs, are caught between classroom contexts and university expectations and between theory and practice" (Crutcher & Naseem, 2016).

Harrison, Dymoke, and Pell (2006) Through his study examined the relationships between cooperative and prospective teachers and fulfilled that with effective relationships and model teaching, Cooperative teachers can support prospective teachers in the process of mentoring.

Campbell and Brummett (2007) Explain mentoring in teacher education as pairing of cooperative and prospective teachers where prospective teacher uses knowledge and experience of cooperative teachers as a resource to learn different teaching skills. Prospective teachers understand their responsibilities with respect to school policies and practices through mentoring during teaching practicum. Ganser (2002) Accomplished that plays imperative role in the professional development of prospective teachers.

Theoretical framework

According to constructivist theory, learning is most effective when new knowledge and skills will be used and individuals construct meaning for themselves (Bickhard, 2004).(Shank, 1993)explain that constructivism holds that learning is a process of building up structures of experience where prior knowledge and experiences scaffold new understandings. This theory may also have applications for guiding prospective teachers' learning of innovative pedagogical skill, particularly as teaching is a complex process with specific knowledge required for developing effective teaching. Constructivism is the theory connected to mentoring practice in this study. It has provided a base to the approach to teach different subjects(Skamp, 2007). Association of mentoring with constructivism provides opportunity to cooperative teachers to guide prospective teachers in a proper way to teach different subjects. These connections of different practices in constructivism, guide mentoring and grant a base for the professional development of prospective teachers (Hudson*, 2004).

Innovative pedagogical skills

There are different attributes associated and related to innovative pedagogical skills. These characteristics include planning for teaching, timetabling, lesson planning, preparation new teaching strategies, use of videos and games, use of A-Vaids, classroom management, questioning skills, assisting with problems, content knowledge implementation, assessment and providing viewpoints (Hudson*, 2004).

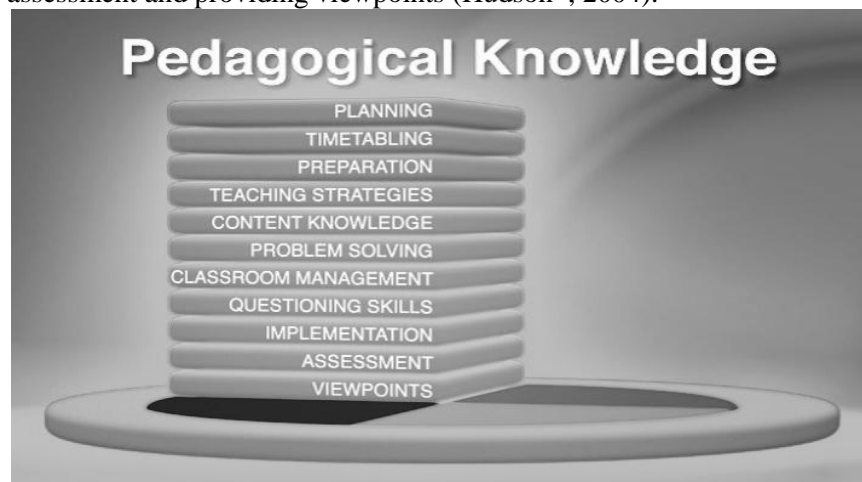


Figure.2.1 Pedagogical knowledge for teaching (Hudson,2014)

To make the teaching operative during teaching practicum, a structured plan is required for the delivery of lessons and connection of all planning with specific standards of curriculum. Timetabling of lessons is the

essential part of plans and researches be evidence for that lessons can be affected by using specific time of the day, time of the subject or lesson maybe scheduled by the difficulty level of the subject and it must be changed from level to level and subject to subject (Hudson*, 2004).

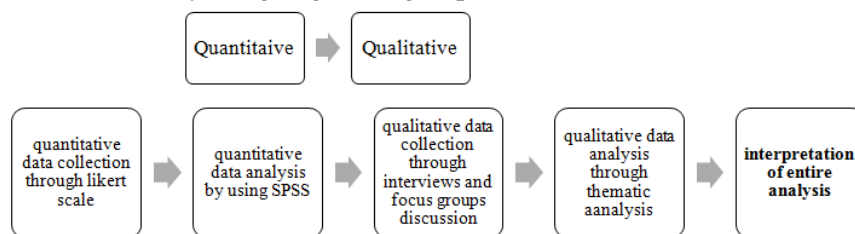
In this study, the researcher has divided the attributes connected to innovative pedagogical skills in the following terms namely; planning of lesson, new teaching strategies, managing classroom discipline and evaluation. There are twenty-six items under four headings, which highlight the perceptions of cooperative and prospective teachers about their practices in the process of mentoring.

Methodology

This study is descriptive and exploratory in nature; it aims to examine existing practices of prospective teachers at teaching practicum, at B.Ed. (Hons) elementary program. Its purpose is to define or observe the features of a situation as it naturally happens. In the current study, the practices of cooperative teachers, university tutors in mentoring the prospective teachers at practicum were examined in natural setting without any control or manipulation. Pragmatism as a paradigm is best suited to answer the research questions of the study.

This study consists of “sequential mixed-methods design” (Cameron, 2009). The purpose of this design is to use quantitative and qualitative approaches alternatively to explore the answers of the research questions. “In sequential design; one type of data provides a basis for collection of another type of data” (Cameron, 2009).

There were two phases in the study; in the first phase researcher took quantitative data by using five points likert scale. Based on quantitative results researcher decided to get in-depth views of university tutors, cooperative and prospective teachers by using semi-structured interviews and by designing focus groups discussion.



Creswell (2009) Figure 3.1: Design of the study

Researcher collected data from university tutors, cooperative teachers and prospective teachers. They all were involved in the mentoring process of teaching practicum of the B.Ed. (Hons) elementary program in the public-sector universities and teacher education institutions of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The researcher applied simple random

sampling, purposive sampling and criterion sampling techniques to select the participants of the study. There were five teacher education institutions in the Rawalpindi and Islamabad which offered B.Ed. (Hons) elementary program. Three institutions were selected by applying purposive sampling technique. This technique was helpful for the appropriate representation of the institutions.

In the first phase of the study one seventh and two fifth semesters of prospective teachers from three selected institutions of B.Ed. (Hons) elementary program were selected through purposive sampling technique. They had completed their practicum in maximum time. Total strength of prospective teachers from three institutions was eighty-seven but only seventy-six responded to questionnaire. Thirty cooperative teachers were selected through simple random sampling technique. For this purpose, the researcher took a list of cooperative teachers from schools connected with selected institutions of teacher education and ten teachers from each institution were selected randomly. In the second phase eighteen prospective teachers i.e. six from each institution were selected with criterion sampling technique for FGD. Only those prospective teachers who mostly disagreed with the statements of questionnaire were selected to cross check the data. Three university tutors were selected from purposive sampling technique. Only those university tutors were selected who supervised and guided the selected prospective teachers during teaching practicum. Three cooperative teachers i.e. one from each institution were selected with the help of criterion sampling technique. Most senior cooperative teachers who worked with prospective teachers for maximum time were the criteria for selection of cooperative teachers for interview. Different sampling techniques were applied to select participants of the study. When participants belong from diverse backgrounds, workplaces and have different performance outcomes then (Patton, 2002) suggests that different sampling techniques will be effective.

Research instruments

The research instrument developed by Hudson* (2004) was adapted from “Mentoring for Effective Primary Science Teaching” (MEPST; Hudson, 2004, p.245). The researcher re-designed the survey instrument with the supervisor’s guidance and used it to examine learning and practicing of innovative pedagogical skills of Prospective teachers in teaching practicum at B. ED (Hons) elementary program. Internal consistency of the instruments was checked through the Cronbach's Alpha (a). Reliability statistics for prospective teachers showed that total number of items was twenty-eight and value of Cronach Alpha was .89.

Researcher administered semi-structured interviews for the university tutors and cooperative teachers who supervised the selected prospective teachers. The interview items focused the intangible aspects of the study to get in-depth understanding about the mentoring practices. The interview questions targeted the objectives and research questions of the study to get insight about the intangible aspects of the research. Focus group discussion was designed for prospective teachers. There were more than ten questions in the focus group which address the highlighted variation in items of the Likert Scale. All data has been collected by the researcher personally.

Results and Findings

Learning and practicing of innovative pedagogical skills of prospective teachers are two-way dialogue in which university tutors help to learn and understand pedagogical skills and then prospective teacher’s practices these skills during teaching practicum. It is the most important part of teaching learning process.

Data for learning and practicing of innovative pedagogical skills of prospective teachers’ in teaching practicum had collected in the first phase through Likert Scale and analyzed by using means, percentages and standard deviations through SPSS. All these help to narrow down collected data to show a clear picture of perception of the participants. Data gathered from interviews and focus group discussion triangulate quantitative data and gives in-depth views of participants regarding practices. Qualitative data were analyzed through open coding, axial coding, analytical coding and selective coding. Open coding helped to analyze the data into sequential order and make conceivable for the researcher to infer the efficient meaning from the perception of participants. Open coding provided the opportunity to drive whole data without depletion of single information.

Table.4.1: Planning of Lesson

Statement	Cooperative teacher			Prospective teacher		
	Percentages	Mean	S.D	Percentages	Mean	S.D
provides clear guidance for planning lessons	85.1%	4.2	1.3	46.1%	3.1	1.61
allowed flexibility in planning	83.9%	4.1	1.4	40.8%	2.9	1.46
using subject knowledge	82%	4.2	1.2	43.5%	2.96	1.33

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effectively						
Pre-think about the problems	87.7%	4.2	1.3	45.2%	2.84	1.48
find out learning material from different sources	711.1%	3.9	1.1	42.8%	2.35	1.38
time management strategies	82.2%	4.0	1.4	53.3%	3.21	1.57
Guided to use time effectively	67.3%	3.8	1.3	41.4%	2.76	1.46
working with small groups	71.5%	3.6	1.2	40.2%	2.23	1.61
innovative activities during class	58.4%	3.1	1.2	39.2%	2.10	1.46

Tables reveal perception of the prospective and cooperative teachers about their practices during teaching practicum. Mean score greater than 3 support the statement of Likert Scale while less than 3 shows majority of perceptions were against the statement.

Table 4.1 exposes that majority of cooperative teachers up to 85% agreed that they provided clear guidance to prospective teachers for planning lessons to teach different subjects but near about 46.1% prospective teachers agreed with the statement. Mean from maximum statements from cooperative teachers was greater than 3 which supported the statement but mean from prospective teachers was less than 3 which did not support the statement.

Table. 4.2: New teaching strategies

Statements	Cooperative teacher			Prospective teacher		
	Percentages	Mean	S.D	Percentages	Mean	S.D
learn latest hands on activities	63.2%	3.65	1.36	41.6%	2.76	1.91
Introduce new viewpoints on project work	78.4%	3.87	1.52	45.34%	2.89	1.62
discussed questioning skills	81.1%	4.1	1.39	39.9%	2.12	1.82
use educational videos and games	74.9%	3.76	1.32	40.32%	2.45	1.71
Implementing co-operative learning	82.3%	4.12	1.74	45.32%	2.91	1.65

Table 4.2 reveals that majority of cooperative teachers 60% to 80% agreed that they provided clear guidance to prospective teachers for learn

latest teaching strategies, introduce new viewpoints, discussed questioning skills, guide to use educational games, and Implementing new teaching strategies to teach different subjects but near about 45% prospective teachers agreed with the statement. Mean from maximum statements from cooperative teachers was greater than 3 which supported the statement but mean from prospective teachers was less than 3 which did not support the statement.

Table.4.3: Managing Classroom Discipline

Statement	Cooperative teacher			Prospective teacher		
	Percentages	Mean	S.D	Percentages	Mean	S.D
	67.98%	3.76	1.42	41.76%	2.78	1.39
manage classroom discipline	63.2%	3.65	1.59	43.21%	2.76	1.82
organize seating of students	78.23%	3.57	1.32	46.43%	2.96	1.61
strategies appropriate to pupils needs	76.45%	3.27	1.91	41.98%	2.78	1.23
good relationships with pupils	82.37%	4.25	1.38	51.43%	3.21	1.41
deal with unexpected happenings	78.4%	3.87	1.52	45.34%	2.89	1.62
Listened attentively	81.1%	4.1	1.39	39.9%	2.12	1.82

Table 4.3 exposes that many cooperative teachers 60% to 80% agreed that they provided clear guidance to prospective teachers on manage classroom discipline, organize seating of students in the class room, different strategies appropriate to pupils needs, maintain good relationships with pupils, how to deal with unexpected happenings, and Listened prospective teachers attentively. Mean from cooperative teachers was greater than 3 which supported the statement but mean from prospective teachers was less than 3 which did not support the statement

Table. 4.4: Evaluation

Statements	Cooperative teacher			Prospective teacher		
	Percentages	Mean	S.D	Percentages	Mean	S.D
assess the students' learning	83%	3.89	1.25	48.7%	3.14	1.15
weaknesses and strengthens of evaluation	83.4%	3.90	1.67	52.6%	2.9	1.34
evaluation techniques in different situations and contexts	83.4	3.97	1.23	38.2	2.80	1.56

Table 4.4 reveals that majority of cooperative teachers 83% agreed that they provided clear guidance to prospective teachers on assessing students' learning, weaknesses and strengthens of evaluation and different evaluation techniques in different situations and contexts. Mean

from cooperative teachers was greater than 3 which supported the statement but mean from prospective teachers was less than 3 which did not support the statement.

Qualitative findings regarding all learning and practicing innovative pedagogical skills support quantitative findings. University tutors and prospective teachers mentioned that cooperative teachers were not willing to work with prospective teachers. They considered prospective teachers as burden on them hence created different hurdles in their ways towards progress. They were not willing to give their classes to the prospective teachers specially science subjects. Cooperative teachers thought that prospective teachers will not produce good results and the overall result of their class would go down as a poor outcome.

Discussion

Results showed contradictions between cooperative and prospective teachers` perceptions. Majority of cooperative teachers agreed that they facilitated the mentoring practices for elementary teaching of different subjects while the prospective teachers did not agree. In qualitative phase during the process of triangulation cooperative teachers said that they provided possible support and guidance to prospective teachers during teaching practicum. Majority of cooperative teachers claimed that they provided possible opportunities to observe them in classroom sittings. They tried to use available hands on materials with appropriate teaching strategies to learn during observation and modeled effective classroom management. Prospective teachers argued that cooperative teachers did not provide support in classroom management, teaching strategies and assessment as well.

These results were similar with quantitative results but provided little explanation of quantitative results. Prospective teachers discussed many problems which they faced during teaching practicum. Their main concern was the lack of professional and psychological support from cooperative teachers as they expected, especially in the classroom settings. Modeled teaching practices were vague and the prospective teachers were failed to learn and improve their teaching practices by modeling.

These findings of the current study contradicted with the results of the study conducted by (Saeed, 2014)on “mentoring in teaching practice at B.Ed. level”. As he concluded that cooperative teachers provide proper guidance to prospective teachers during teaching practicum in lesson planning, teaching strategies and classroom discipline. I conjecture the reasons of contradiction between both studies maybe difference of B.Ed. program. The current study is conducted on

B.Ed. (Hons) four years' program while other study was conducted on B.Ed. one-year program.

Almost all prospective teachers mentioned that they were treated as Assistants or substitute teachers during teaching practicum. Consequently, they fail to deliver their prepared thirty lesson plans. It was similar condition like Samina Naseem (Naseem, 2014) shared her experience that when she visited schools as university tutor for the observation of prospective teachers. She was surprised to see that prospective teachers were treated as substitute teachers. This issue was discussed with cooperative teacher during interviews as a quite serious matter. They accepted and told that due to shortage of faculty sometimes they treated prospective teachers as substitute teachers. Without prior planning of lesson and classroom activities, prospective teachers cannot teach properly and effectively.

More than half of prospective teachers argued that they were not able to gain much knowledge about teaching strategies, classroom management and control from their cooperative teachers during teaching practicum based on the data gathered from interviews and FGD, there were a lot of problems and challenges that prospective teachers faced during teaching practicum. The most common problem they shared was the relationships with cooperative teachers. The prospective teachers were confused about the behavior of cooperative teachers and lack of time they spend with them. Cooperative teachers' lack of training created tough working environment for them. Cooperative teachers used corporal punishment as a tool for classroom discipline. On the other side, prospective teachers mentioned that they were in trouble too regarding establishing relationships and communication with faculty. School teachers even did not like to sit with them in free time.

Conclusion

Data gathered from both sides showed contradiction between perceptions of the participants. Cooperative teachers claimed that they provided possible support to prospective teachers to learn and practice innovative pedagogical skills during teaching practicum. On the other hand, prospective teachers argued that cooperative teachers did not provide support in lesson planning, classroom management, classroom discipline, teaching strategies and assessment as well.

Qualitative results were similar with quantitative but provided little explanation about participants' perception. Prospective teachers faced many problems in learning and practicing innovative pedagogical skills during teaching practicum. Their main concern was the lack of psychological and professional support from cooperative teachers as they expected, especially in the classroom settings. Prospective teachers were

failed to learn and improve their teaching practices from cooperative teachers.

Prospective teachers pointed out that cooperative teachers were unaware of questioning skill and problem-solving strategies for innovative pedagogical practices during observations. Mostly cooperative teachers left prospective teachers in the class alone or they were not available in the class; make it difficult for the prospective teachers to maintain discipline in the class room alone. Prospective teachers mentioned that during teaching practicum they were treated as substitute teachers consequently, they fail to deliver their required lesson plans.

Based on the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data, it can be concluded that there existed a vast contradiction between the perceptions of participants. They did not agree on providing guidance in planning lessons, designing lesson activities, managing classroom discipline, practicing latest techniques, providing feedback and reflection on lesson etc.

University tutors and cooperative teachers both tried to provide guideline to prospective teachers during teaching practicum but it was difficult for cooperative teachers to touch all the components of practicum without proper training. Teaching practicum for prospective teachers had quite an experience to explore to what teaching is all about in real life situations. Prospective teachers learnt a lot from this experience but they needed proper guidance from all relevant parties to learn how to teach with its original spirit.

The role of school in mentoring is not simple and straightforward. School can provide the best learning environment to prospective teacher. But according to the study all the schools were not supportive; their head teachers did not take interest in the practicum because of their busy schedule. As a result, prospective teachers faced many difficulties. Collaborative partnership is needed between school and university for the successful completion of practicum.

Based on the findings the researcher concludes that majority of prospective teachers had not very pleasant relationship with cooperative teachers and other staff at school during teaching practicum. They faced a lot of problems and challenges. They don't find suitable atmosphere and cooperation from school to learn how to teach. Although it can be made less frustrating by establishing good partnerships between all participants.

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