

# Assessment of Teaching Practice: Perceptions of Pupil Teachers towards Supervisors and Cooperating Teacher's Practices

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## Abstract

*The present study aims at perceptions of pupil teachers towards supervisors and cooperating teachers' practices during teaching practice. The primary objective of the study was to assess the practices of supervisors and cooperating teachers during teaching practice. This study may provide exhaustive understanding of practices of supervisors and cooperating practices during teaching practice. Pupil teachers' performance may be more effective as a result of identifying the roles of supervisors and cooperating teachers during teaching practice. The target 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. Data was collected through a questionnaire. The analysis of data revealed that significant differences exist in assessment practices of cooperating teachers and supervisors.*

**Keywords:** Teaching practice, Cooperating teachers, Supervisors

## Introduction

Teaching practice is one of the essential components of pre-service teacher training that provides an opportunity for pupil teachers to explore their knowledge and skills in realistic teaching learning settings. Assessment of teaching practice enables the pupil teachers in becoming aware of their strengths and weaknesses. The present study focuses on perceptions of pupil teachers towards the role of supervisors' and cooperating teachers' practices during the teaching practice. A comparison between the roles of supervisors and cooperating teachers was made on the basis of seven items that were rated by pupil teachers on five point Likert scale.

Kumar and Ruchika indicate that few teachers are born-teachers whereas most teachers are made.<sup>1</sup> Experts in the field of

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teacher education agree that the success and value of teaching practice depends, in a large measure, on the nature and extent of the supervision. The supervisor of teaching practice is the key individual who can improve teaching and who can help the pupil teachers achieve the objectives of teaching practice. The purpose of supervision is to improve instruction and guide the pupil teachers in actual classroom teaching.

#### *Objectives of the Study*

- To assess the practices of supervisors and cooperating teachers during teaching practice.
- To know the opinion of pupil teachers about the role of supervisors and cooperating teachers during teaching practice.
- To analyze the role of supervisors and cooperating teachers performed during teaching practice.

#### **Teaching Practice**

The preparation of teachers is of utmost importance. Future teachers rely on experiences in teacher preparation programs to gain valuable knowledge and wisdom of practice about the realness of teaching.<sup>2</sup> Evertson, Hawley, and Zlotnick wrote that among students who become teachers, those enrolled in formal pre-service preparation programs are more likely to be effective than those who do not have such training.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Brock & Grady anticipated that the teaching practice provides opportunities to pupil teachers for developing professional capability.<sup>4</sup>

Teaching practice experiences permit the pupil teachers to teach in the classroom, according to the timetable provided to them by the practicing school. Pupil teachers teach their major and minor subjects, as arranged by the teaching practice department and teaching practice school.

Teaching practice is an important component of a teacher training program. It provides an opportunity for pupil teachers to tryout their knowledge and skills in realistic teaching and learning environment.<sup>5</sup> Similarly Davis and John are of the view that teaching practice is a socializing experience.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Oh., Ankers., Joseph, and Catherine claim that dialogues during teaching practice develop more confidence among pupil teachers.<sup>7</sup> However, Kennedy thinks that at one stage of their teaching practice training, pupil teachers must be capable to express their personal educational philosophies and theories.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Schon and Vincent points out that in teaching the theoretic aspects

are implanted and inseparable from practice.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, Perry points out that it is during practice teaching that knowledge of student teacher is affirmed.<sup>10</sup>

Effective teaching, like any other skill, requires practice. Pupil teachers need guidance of skilled faculty members. Teaching practice is one of the utmost essential elements of an effective teacher education program. This is where beginning teachers make important connections between theory and the realities of learning in classrooms and schools. According to Verma a very basic and indispensable component of teacher education is practical work.<sup>11</sup>

Teaching practice is a part of most teacher education programs and is planned to provide a link between the courses studied in university or other institutional program and the 'real' world of teachers and students in a classroom.<sup>12</sup> Teaching practice provides the pupil teachers an opportunity to try out what they learn during the teacher education program. It happens to be the most stimulating and productive part of teacher training program as it gives the pupil teachers clearest idea of how much they like the job and how well they can cope with it. It develops confidence and positive attitudes towards teaching among pupil teachers. Pupil teachers who enter schools nervously for teaching practice for the first time emerge at the end of it with renewed confidence.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, teaching practice holds a central position in any teacher education program as it brings pre-service teachers face to face with the actual challenges of the profession. They get an opportunity to socialize with students that fosters in them a sense of empowerment and usefulness.<sup>14</sup>

Teaching practice is collaboration between the teacher education institutions and the practicing schools involving pupil teachers, supervisors, cooperating teachers and pupils; it highlights the interdependency of the teacher education institutions and the practicing schools. Teaching practice enables pupil teachers to experience school-based teaching as basic requirement of their degree programmes. It also provides opportunity to pupil teachers to develop their abilities to effectively plan and prepare lessons, implement lessons and assess their own teaching and pupil learning.

Stones and Sidney stated that the term teaching practice has three major connotations: the practicing of teacher skills and acquisition of the role of a teacher, the whole range of experience that students go through in school, and the practical aspects of courses as distinct from the critical studies.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Fagbulu (1984) has defined teaching practice

that it is a kind of apprenticeship stage during which the students are sent out to school to gain practical and professional experience by translating all the educational theories they have acquired or learnt during training into practice.<sup>16</sup> The teaching practice is considered as one of the most useful components of the teacher education programme by pupil teachers and teacher educators.<sup>17</sup>

### **Assessment of Teaching Practice**

Supervision is the core of teaching practice exercise. Valid information on pupil teachers' performances is obtained only through the supervision of their live teaching. The role of supervisors therefore is of great importance. Generally, supervision and some form of initial assessment are carried out by the lecturers in the training institution concerned. The supervision of pupil teachers is mainly the duty of college/university teachers. Supervision involves guiding, helping, correcting, advising, assessing and even showing the pupil teacher how to teach better.<sup>18</sup>

Assessment of pupil teachers' competencies in practice teaching is an organized work to touch the excellence of the educational process. In the teaching practice, the supervisors and cooperating teachers assess the students' performance. The assessment is the teacher's reflection on the students' teaching competencies. Stones and Sidney are of the view that the assessment of practice teaching for certification is a very challenging subject.<sup>19</sup> Pupil teachers have been graded according to the criteria held by individual supervisors and cooperating teachers or specific institutions.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisors and Cooperating Teachers**

The supervisor has a significant role in teaching practice as a resource person, counselor, mentor, advisor, evaluator and interpreter of feedback. During teaching practice it is the responsibility of supervisor to support the pupil teachers<sup>20</sup> and provide an extensive amount of feedback.<sup>21</sup>

Cooperating teachers observe the lessons delivered by pupil teachers and provide feedback to the pupil teachers. Pupil teachers also observe the lectures of their cooperating teacher(s), with their consent. They can share their expertise, knowledge and skills with pupil teachers to apprise them about ground realities of classrooms.

Cooperating teachers are most often experienced classroom practitioners assigned to supervise and guide the pupil

teachers during teaching practice. In this regard, Zimper and Sherril assert that 'the most common form of practitioner involvement in teacher education programs has been through the utilization of cooperating teachers'.<sup>22</sup>

In New Zealand and Australia, the cooperating teacher is responsible for mentoring and evaluating pupil teachers. In Germany, the United State, Canada and Singapore both school- and college/university-based faculty assess students. LaBoskey and Anna determined that pupil teachers were more focused on the practice and development of teaching and more reflective when placed with a cooperating teacher who shared their philosophy of teaching.<sup>23</sup> Poster and Doreen suggests that there should be an initial meeting between cooperating teacher and student teacher during preliminary visit in school. He says that initial meeting is helpful for providing guidelines for the process of practice teaching.<sup>24</sup>

The cooperating teachers undertake the prime responsibility of supervising and mentoring pupil teachers but they can greatly influence the student teacher's teaching context and also their behavior and beliefs in both positive and negative terms.<sup>25</sup>

### **Methodology**

The population consists of pupil teachers doing teaching practice (session 2011-13) and sample was taken from 16 teacher training institutions of public sector universities of Punjab province in Pakistan where MA Education program was being offered. All the pupil teachers of MA Education program who were present on the day of data collection were considered as sample. The total number of these pupil teachers was 638. Pupil teachers were asked to give opinion about the characteristics/roles of supervisors and cooperative teachers during teaching practice.

A questionnaire based on 5-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) was designed to obtain the opinion of prospective teachers regarding the role/characteristics of supervisors and cooperating teachers performed during teaching practice.

A comparison between the role of supervisors and cooperating teachers was made on the basis of seven items that were rated by pupil teachers on five point Likert scale.

Independent sample t-test was applied, after verifying the assumptions, to compare the rating of supervisors and cooperative teachers. Cohen's d is calculated by using means & standard

deviations of the two groups that provides the effect size of significant differences.

## Results

The 638 pupil teachers rated the role of cooperating teachers and supervisors during their training session. Pupil teachers rated the presence of cooperating teachers ( $3.46 \pm 1.11$ ) and supervisors ( $3.45 \pm 1.20$ ) during the teaching practice with almost similar intensity. Cooperating teachers ( $3.30 \pm 1.39$ ) remained significantly ( $p < .05$ ) more helpful for pupil teachers in lessons planning and preparing instructional materials, as compared to their supervisors ( $2.95 \pm 0.88$ ) with medium effect size (i.e.  $d = 0.3-0.6$ ).

Table 1: Supervisors' and cooperating teachers' characteristic during teaching practice (N= 638)

Statement		Percentage Response							Sig.	d <sup>t</sup>
		Mean	SD	SA	A	UN	DA	SD		
Remained in the practicing school on daily basis	Sup	3.45	1.20	8.2	13.3	25.4	31.7	21.4	.561	-
	Coop	3.46	1.11	2.5	19.3	29.9	26.0	22.3		
Helped prospective teachers in lessons planning and preparing instructional materials	Sup	2.95	0.88	0.3	36.1	36.4	22.9	4.4	<.001*	.30
	Coop	3.30	1.39	16.6	12.5	19.3	27.6	24.0		
Approved & signed lesson plan before the delivery	Sup	3.25	1.37	15.7	14.7	20.8	26.5	22.3	.009*	.15
	Coop	3.04	1.49	25.2	12.5	15.2	26.8	20.2		
Observed the lesson throughout the period according to lesson plan	Sup	3.15	1.32	15.2	16.8	24.0	26.2	17.9	.006*	.16
	Coop	3.36	1.30	15.0	13.2	17.2	29.8	24.8		
Provided frequent feedback on lesson observed	Sup	3.38	1.42	15.4	13.5	17.9	24.5	28.8	.049*	.03
	Coop	3.34	1.33	14.4	12.1	20.4	31.7	21.5		
Encouraged and	Sup	3.11	1.49	24.3	11.8	14.9	27.1	21.9	<.001*	.39

supported the right decisions of prospective teachers	Coop	3.65	1.28	7.7	13.6	18.3	26.5	33.9		
Helped the prospective teachers in solving their problems	Sup	3.67	0.85	2.5	12.5	6.0	73.7	5.3	.111	-
	Coop	3.76	1.14	5.0	10.5	17.7	37.0	29.8		

SD = Standard Deviation  
 Cop = Cooperating Teachers; Sup Supervisors  
 SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; UNC = Uncertain; DA = Disagree; SDA = Strongly Disagree  
 \*significant at  $p < .05$   
 † Cohen's d is calculated by using means & standard deviations of two groups

Supervisors ( $3.25 \pm 1.37$ ) were significantly ( $p < .05$ ) more vigilant for approval of lesson plan before the delivery as compared to their cooperating teachers ( $3.04 \pm 1.49$ ) with small effect size (i.e.  $d < 0.3$ ). Pupil teachers reported that cooperating teachers ( $3.36 \pm 1.38$ ) were significantly ( $p < .05$ ) more active in observing the lesson throughout the period according to lesson plan as compared to their supervisors ( $3.15 \pm 1.32$ ) with small effect size (i.e.  $d < 0.3$ ). Supervisors ( $3.38 \pm 1.42$ ) provided significantly more feedbacks on lesson observed as compared to their cooperating teachers ( $3.34 \pm 1.33$ ) with very small effect size (i.e.  $d < 0.1$ ). While, pupil teachers got significantly more encouragement and support from cooperating teachers ( $3.65 \pm 1.28$ ), as compared to supervisors with medium effect size (i.e.  $d < 0.1$ ).

Both supervisors ( $3.67 \pm 0.85$ ) and cooperating teachers ( $3.76 \pm 1.14$ ) almost equally remained helpful in solving the problems of pupil teachers with highest mean scores as compared to the rest of the items. The correlation ( $r = .631$ ) between the scores of supervisors and cooperating teachers was positive and also significant at the .01 level.

Out of seven items that describe the seven characteristics/roles of supervisors and cooperative teachers, only five were significantly different as explained in the aforesaid discussion.

### Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the research findings:-

- Pupil teachers have a favorable perception of assessment of teaching practice by cooperating teachers as compared to their supervisors.

- There is a statistically significant difference in the characteristics/role of supervisors and cooperating teachers during teaching practice in favor of cooperating teachers as perceived by pupil teachers.
- Cooperating teachers were significantly more active in observing the lesson throughout the period according to lesson plan as compared to supervisors.
- Cooperating teachers remained significantly more helpful for pupil teachers in lessons planning and preparing instructional materials as compared to supervisors.
- Pupil teachers got significantly more encouragement and support from cooperating teachers as compared to supervisors.
- Both supervisors and cooperating teachers remained almost equally helpful in solving the problems of pupil teachers.
- Both supervisors and cooperating teachers remained almost equally present in practicing school during the teaching practice.



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