

Navigating the Practicum: An Investigation into the Problems Faced by B. Ed (Hons) Prospective Teachers



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Abstract: *The main purpose of this study was to identify the problems faced by the prospective teachers during teaching practice at B. Ed (Hons) level. All prospective teachers (18 males and 116 females) enrolled in 4th and 8th semesters at the Department of Education, University of Kotli AJ&K and its affiliated colleges (Sir Syed College of Education Kotli and Guidance Girls Degree College Kotli) constituted the population of the study. The researchers selected 134 prospective teachers as the sample of the study using universal sampling technique. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was self-developed by the researchers to collect the data. Frequency, percentage, and mean scores were used to analyze the data. It was found that prospective teachers face numerous problems including difficulty in time management, students' behavior problems, financial constraints, transportation issues, heavy workload, rudeness of cooperative teachers, and difficulty in managing large classes. It was concluded that prospective teachers face significant personal, academic, cooperative teacher-related, head-teacher-related, and university/ school-related problems during their teaching practice. It is recommended that proper orientation seminars and workshops may be conducted before sending prospective teachers for teaching practice, and transport facilities may be arranged for them.*

Keywords: Teaching Practice, Prospective Teachers, Problems, B. Ed (Hons), Teacher Education

Introduction

Teaching is the ability to guide someone to improve his knowledge and develop discipline. Teaching as a process improves both the teachers and the students who are learning. The teacher can understand the requirements and interests of each student by practicing teaching. The focus in teaching practice is the learning of students (Accurso & Gebhard, 2021). Teaching guides knowledge improvement and discipline of both teachers and students. Teachers

understand students' interest, helping them acquire knowledge, build confidence, and shape their behavior.

Teaching practice is an essential part of every single teacher's education program that ultimately results in awarding of a qualified teaching credential instead of a degree or certificate to its graduates. It is the application of various teaching methods and strategies that prospective teachers acquire throughout their time at the educational institutions. A recent

study on the challenges of teaching practice highlights the need for better support systems, specialized training for supervisors, and the integration of modern tools to ensure these aims are met (Malik et al., 2023).

According to Bovill (2020), teaching practice involves a variety of practices that potential teachers engage in a genuine classroom and school setting. Teaching practice may be summed up as the period spent by aspiring teachers working under the guidance of a mentor teacher to gain experience in the classroom. Teaching practice includes lesson planning, classroom management, student assessment, and other activities that prospective teachers engage in a real classroom and school setting.

Research on the aims of teaching practice programs indicates they are designed to: a) allow prospective teachers to put their knowledge learned in prior semesters to use; b) allow for the evaluation of the student's potential as a teacher and the provision of positive comments; and c) give prospective teachers hands-on experience in the classroom to help them overcome discipline issues and deal with unexpected circumstances (Malik et al., 2023).

According to Goh & Abdul-Wahab (2020), a prospective teacher is someone who works at a school for a limited time under supervision as part of a program to become a teacher. Prospective teachers are not without their share of difficulties. As a result, numerous scholars from a wide variety of backgrounds have written extensively about the difficulties that prospective teachers face in the classroom. These include applying theories in the classroom, selecting an effective teaching strategy, and determining whether their students have learned the intended material.

In Pakistan, there are few studies related to problems faced by prospective teachers during teaching practice at B. Ed (Hons) level. A study by Malik et al. (2023) investigated the challenges and opportunities for teaching practice, particularly in the context of transitioning to new modes of learning, highlighting issues with supervision and adaptation. However, a noticeable gap exists within the context of Pakistan, particularly in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, where no study has been conducted about specific problems including financial problems and transportation problems during teaching practice, as well as adopting teaching methodologies according to the needs of students due to lack of experience. Hence, the researchers believe that in the Azad

Jammu and Kashmir context, there is a need to identify problems faced by prospective teachers during teaching practice at B. Ed (Hons) level in Kotli AJ&K. Therefore, the current study is an attempt to fulfill this gap.

Objectives

1. To identify the problems faced by the prospective teachers during teaching practice at B. Ed (Hons) level.
2. To explore the personal problems faced by the prospective teachers during teaching practice.
3. To examine the academic/professional problems faced by the prospective teachers during teaching practice.
4. To investigate the cooperative teacher-related and head-teacher-related problems faced by the prospective teachers.
5. To analyze the university and school-related problems faced by the prospective teachers.

Research Questions

Following were the research questions of the study:

1. What are the problems faced by the prospective teachers during teaching practice at B. Ed (Hons) level?
2. What are the personal problems faced by the prospective teachers during teaching practice?
3. What are the academic/professional problems faced by the prospective teachers during teaching practice?
4. What are the cooperative teacher-related and head-teacher-related problems faced by the prospective teachers?
5. What are the university and school-related problems faced by the prospective teachers?

Literature Review

This section discusses different issues faced by student teachers based on the five main areas of the study: the teaching practice itself, personal issues, academic and professional issues, problems with cooperating teachers and head teachers, problems related to the university and school.

Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is the essential element of teacher education through which theory is connected with practice. Arrington (2023) says that the term covers the range of classroom and school experiences that prospective teachers go

through. Loose & Ryan (2020) see it as a teaching situation in which trainees gradually take over the role of teacher. It is the implementation of teaching principles, /methods, the life of a school on a day-to-day basis. According to Bovill (2020), teaching practice means taking part in real classrooms and schools first-hand which includes lesson planning, classroom management, student assessment with the support of a mentor. Malik et al. (2023) claim that the main purpose is to provide prospective teachers with opportunities in which they can show their knowledge, get feedback, practice their skills, and learn to manage unforeseen situations in the classroom. However, this is only possible after the teacher trainees have successfully dealt with the challenges posed by institutions and supervisors.

Problems Faced by Prospective Teachers

Apart from its importance, teaching practicum is always accompanied by problems. B.Ed. students in Pakistan have listed a very wide range of problems in their teaching practice which also include transport, workload, classroom management, planning lessons, lack of administrative cooperation (Bibi & Aziz, 2024). Besides that, Goh & Abdul-Wahab (2020) found that student teachers have difficulties with the application of theories, deciding on the best teaching strategies, and evaluating students' learning. This research separates different aspects of the problems and brings them under a few closely related categories.

Personal Problems. Personal issues play a big role in shaping a teacher in training's success and happiness.

Not having enough time is a really important problem that began to get teachers in training stressed. How to plan classes and study at the same time are just some of the things that create the stress and time shortage. Financial inability goes along with the above situation. The study of how teachers in training understand things show that not having money for the transport is the most important bad fortune, which is so bad that it becomes the reason for not going to the school on time (Araya et al., 2020).

Transport is quite a different problem, but very important; discontinuity or high price of transport can bring about lateness or missing the classes, besides the stress that goes with the whole process of the practicum (Bibi & Aziz, 2024). Moreover, there are times when teachers in training witness to at a loss with incorrigible pupil behavior and personally quite frankly that

just about breaks their spirit and turn their belief in the power of what they can do in the classroom dwindling (Chang, 2013).

Academic/Professional Problems.

Implementing the knowledge gained in training/lectures in a real school situation is fraught with lots of problems.

The main one is the implementation of the right teaching methods for different students, because a university classroom is a controlled environment, unlike what one can find in a real school (Goh & Abdul-Wahab, 2020). Managing the multiple roles of teachers is a frequent focus of research on teacher stress to date. also struggle to deal with multiple roles such as the preparation of lesson plans in detail while doing their study assignments. This may mislead them to change their focus from one to another quite often.

In fact, Bibi and Aziz (2024) study who are the authors of the piece that you can find at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1334387.pdf> brings to light the following as the main classes that have given lots of headache to the teachers during their training sessions: the management of the class and the preparing the lesson plans, motivating the students who have lost interest and inactive is the further professional trouble that is often the case with the inexperienced teachers (Bibi & Aziz, 2024).

Cooperative Teacher-Related Problems. The relationship with the cooperative or mentor teacher is key, and troubles in this area may have a very negative impact.

One of the biggest problems is the disrespectful and uncooperative conduct of some cooperative teachers, who instead of simply providing feedback that guides, are harsh and unkind so that a student-teacher is put off and the classroom becomes a place where everyone tenses up (Naseem, 2024).

This behavior may be reflected in the form of hurtful words or wrong feedback, which leaves the learner bewildered rather than being able to understand.

Other problems that have been reported are the absence of support and lack of collaboration from the school, which is in fact a problem at the level of the institution but often the mentor's attitude is the one that the students are most aware of (Araya et al., 2020).

Another big grievance is that cooperative teachers involve the learners in doing more work, almost as if they were an extra pair of hands, rather than giving them the opportunity

to concentrate on their professional growth.

Problems Created by the Head Teacher.

The head teacher and the rest of the school management are not only responsible for the outcomes of the practicum, but they have the power to influence them for better or for worse. First and foremost, a lack of support and trust on the part of the school leadership is one of the major stumbling blocks. A leadership style that is either excessively controlling or authoritarian can suppress the creativity of a student teacher/learner and the school environment can become hostile for these individuals without them even realizing it. Involving student teachers in holding professional activities such as Parents Teacher Meetings (PTMs) and extra-curricular activities is one of the head teacher's main responsibilities; their non-involvement in these is comparable to a worker not being provided with an opportunity to learn. Besides that, not carrying out regular observations of lessons and the failure to recognize the student teacher as a bona fide member of staff so that they undermine and doubting one's authority and sense of belonging (Loose & Ryan, 2020).

University and School-Related Problems. The systemic problems at the institutional level often place teachers in a very difficult scenario. For example, shortages of teaching materials, projectors, even proper sitting arrangements keep making teachers' work very tricky. After all, that is why we often hear about the lack of proper schools facilities, shortage of furniture and teaching aids, as well as low university support being the major institutional challenges (Araya et al., 2020). In turn, not having enough support to prepare lesson materials and define specific objectives becomes a struggle. One of the other big institutional issues is the excessive work that results in anxiety. Experienced teachers sometimes delegate their workload to practising teachers and then, besides having to face the worry of being assessed, coping with the large classes they have to manage also brings about a lot of stress (Bibi & Aziz, 2024). Moreover, the lack of an efficient supervisory system and a cooperative attitude from both the university and school staff worsens the situation, making the prospective teachers' feel as if they don't have anyone to support them in this new phase of their lives.

Research Methodology

This research study was descriptive, and the data were collected through a cross-sectional survey method. All the prospective teachers (18 males and 116 females) from 4th and 8th semesters at

the Department of Education, University of Kotli AJ&K and affiliated colleges (Sir Syed College of Education Kotli and Guidance Girls Degree College Kotli) were the population of the study. Due to practical constraints, 134 prospective teachers were taken as a sample by the researchers using the universal sampling technique. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was self-developed by the researchers, consisting of 34 statements covering five sections: Personal Problems (07), Academic/Professional Problems (06), Cooperative Teacher-Related Problems (06), Head-Teacher Related Problems (06), and University and School Related Problems (09). The questionnaire was validated by four educational experts, and reliability was checked using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.80$), which was acceptable for further research. Data were collected personally by the researchers and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22, employing frequency, percentage, and mean scores.

Results

Table 1: Personal Problems Faced by Prospective Teachers (N=134)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	PA (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)	Mean
Difficulty in time management during classes	40	32	8	8	12	3.79
Face students' behavior problems	23	48	13	10	6	3.72
Difficulty in using methods according to needs of students	26	31	35	7	0.7	3.75
Financial problems to prepare teaching aids	30	29	22	13	6	3.66
Despite workload, pay full attention to study	22	37	20	11	10	3.51
Difficulty to teach some subjects	38	25	22	12	3	3.83
Difficulty in getting transportation	36	26	20	14	4	3.76

Table 1 shows that 92% of respondents agreed that prospective teachers face difficulty in using methods according to the needs of students, 85% agreed with difficulty in teaching some subjects, 84% agreed with students' behavior problems, 82% agreed with transportation difficulties, 81% agreed with financial problems, and 80% agreed with time management difficulties.

Table 2: Academic/Professional Problems Faced by Prospective Teachers (N=134)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	PA (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)	Mean
Difficulty to balance multi-responsibilities during strict schedule	40	24	24	7	5	3.85
Difficulty in implementation of teaching methods	17	47	25	6	5	3.64
Difficulties in motivating students	15	31	28	18	8	3.27
Difficulties in managing parental expectations	28	27	23	13	9	3.80
Difficulty to pay full attention to studies	26	29	13	16	16	3.31
Difficulty in balancing group learning activities	23	34	23	13	7	3.52

Table 2 shows that 89% of respondents agreed with difficulty in implementation of teaching methods, 88% agreed with difficulty balancing multi-responsibilities, 80% agreed with difficulty in balancing group learning activities, 78% agreed with difficulties managing parental expectations, and 74% agreed with difficulties motivating students.

Table 3: Cooperative Teacher-Related Problems (N=134)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	PA (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)	Mean
Rudeness of cooperative teacher makes prospective teachers tense	43	19	22	12	4	3.83
Cooperative teacher gives harsh comments	15	36	21	17	11	3.26
Cooperative teacher gives improper feedback	28	29	26	9	8	3.59
Prospective teachers face favoritism	25	23	26	18	8	3.38
Cooperative teacher stays at distance	24	30	19	18	9	3.42
Cooperative teacher takes more work	30	33	15	15	7	3.63

Table 3 shows that 84% of respondents agreed that rudeness of cooperative teachers makes them tense during lesson delivery, 83% agreed that cooperative teachers give improper feedback, 78% agreed that cooperative teachers take more work, 74% agreed with favoritism, and 73% agreed that cooperative teachers stay at distance.

Table 4: Head-Teacher Related Problems (N=134)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	PA (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)	Mean
Auto-creative style of head-teacher is common	41	23	22	7	7	3.83
Head-teacher involves in Parents Teacher Meeting	22	32	24	15	7	3.49
Head-teacher gives proper timetable	24	34	22	14	6	3.54
Head-teacher involves in extra-curricular activities	23	25	25	18	9	3.35
Head-teacher monitors classes regularly	22	35	18	15	10	3.45
Head-teacher accepts prospective teachers as teachers	30	25	16	19	10	3.44

Table 4 shows that 86% of respondents agreed that the auto-creative style of head-teachers is common, 80% agreed that head-teachers give proper timetables, 78% agreed that head-teachers involve prospective teachers in PTMs, 75% agreed that head-teachers monitor classes regularly, 73% agreed with involvement in extra-curricular activities, and 71% agreed that head-teachers accept them as teachers.

Table 5: University and School Related Problems (N=134)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	PA (%)	DA (%)	SDA (%)	Mean
School staff provides proper sitting arrangement	43	28	10	7	12	3.82
School staff shows cooperative attitude	14	48	19	11	8	3.50
Difficulty in preparing material for successful lesson	23	34	31	7	5	3.63
Feel anxiety due to workload	27	31	19	14	9	3.53
Regular teachers assign workload to prospective teachers	22	34	27	10	7	3.54
Difficulty in formulation of specific objectives	25	29	25	16	5	3.52
Difficulty in developing previous knowledge testing	20	34	25	16	5	3.50
Difficulty in managing large classes	31	31	22	12	4	3.70
Despite limited time, teach students properly	27	28	20	12	13	3.43

Table 5 shows that 88% of respondents agreed with difficulty in preparing material for successful lessons, 84% agreed with difficulty managing large classes, 83% agreed that regular teachers assign their workload to prospective teachers, 81% agreed about sitting arrangements and cooperative attitude of school staff, 79% agreed with difficulty in formulation of objectives and previous knowledge testing, and 77% agreed with anxiety due to workload.

Discussions

Teaching practice is a crucial component of teacher education programs, allowing prospective teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in real classroom settings. However, this study reveals that prospective teachers face numerous challenges during their teaching practice at B. Ed (Hons) level in Kotli, AJ&K. The study disclosed some noteworthy findings about these issues which perfectly match the literature recently from Pakistan.

Coming to the personal issues, the research pointed out that 92% of the future teachers find it difficult to use the teaching methods that are in line with the needs of the students. This correlates with the issue of managing classrooms and adapting the instructions that Bibi & Aziz (2024) identified. One implication is that teacher training programs may have to

really get the prospective teachers on the ground differentiating instruction and student-centered teaching methods practically. Furthermore, 85% cannot teach some subjects whereas 84% cannot handle students' behavior problems. The 82% of those interviewed who mentioned transportation problems are in a way reflecting the conclusions of Araya et al. (2020), who found that the inability to pay for transportation is a major obstacle for aspiring teachers. The matter is very much relevant in the Kotli district where there may be hardly any public transportation. While 81% of the participants mentioned financial issues, 80% of the teachers-to-be are experiencing problems in time management.

Talking about personal challenges, nearly one hundred percent of future teachers in their teaching practices struggle to implement teaching methods. This correlates with the study of Goh & Abdul-Wahab (2020) who identify that one of the difficulties prospective teachers have is the area of transferring theoretical knowledge to practice.

Eighty-eight percent face difficulties balancing multi-responsibilities during strict schedules, while 80% face difficulty in balancing group learning activities. Managing parental expectations was difficult for 78% of respondents, and motivating students was difficult for 74% of prospective teachers.

Regarding cooperative teacher-related problems, 84% of prospective teachers reported that the rudeness of cooperative teachers makes them tense during lesson delivery. This finding is strongly supported by Naseem (2024), who documented the arrogant, inflexible, and rude behavior encountered by prospective teachers from school staff, which creates a discouraging environment. This indicates a need for better training and selection of cooperative teachers who can provide constructive guidance and support. Eighty-three percent reported improper feedback from cooperative teachers, while 78% reported that cooperative teachers take more work from them.

Regarding head-teacher-related problems, 86% of respondents agreed that the auto-creative style of head-teachers is common, while 80% agreed that head-teachers provide proper timetables. Involvement in PTMs was reported by 78% of prospective teachers.

Regarding university and school-related problems, 88% of prospective teachers face difficulty in preparing material for successful lessons. This finding aligns with Araya et al. (2020), who identified a lack of adequate school

facilities and teaching aids as a major institutional barrier. Eighty-four percent face difficulty in managing large classes, which is a core challenge of classroom management noted by Bibi & Aziz (2024). Eighty-three percent reported that regular teachers assign their teaching workload to prospective teachers. The heavy workload reported by prospective teachers (77% experiencing anxiety) is consistent with broader findings on the stress and workload challenges in teaching practicums (Bibi & Aziz, 2024).

Together, these results imply that teacher education programs in AJ&K should focus on various aspects of the difficulties encountered by trainee teachers. The recurring nature of these issues in various categories highlights the necessity for comprehensive reforms in teacher education programs, as pointed out by Malik et al. (2023), who propose enhanced oversight, targeted training for mentoring teachers, and the incorporation of state-of-the-art instruments.

Conclusions

Drawing on the results of this research, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Prospective teachers face significant personal problems including difficulty in time management during classes, students' behavior problems, difficulty in using teaching methods according to student needs, financial problems to prepare teaching aids, difficulty in teaching some subjects, and difficulty in getting transportation.
2. Academic and professional problems faced by prospective teachers include difficulties in balancing multi-responsibilities during strict schedules, implementation of teaching methods, motivating students, managing parental expectations, paying full attention to their studies, and balancing group learning activities.
3. Cooperative teacher-related problems include rudeness making prospective teachers tense during lesson delivery, harsh comments, improper feedback, favoritism, distance maintained by cooperative teachers, and cooperative teachers taking more work from prospective teachers.
4. Head-teacher-related problems include auto-creative style of head-teachers, involvement in PTMs and extra-curricular activities, provision of timetables, class monitoring, and

acceptance of prospective teachers as teachers.

5. University and school-related problems include difficulty in preparing material for successful lessons, anxiety due to workload, regular teachers assigning their workload to prospective teachers, difficulty in formulation of specific objectives, difficulty in developing previous knowledge testing, difficulty in managing large classes, and time constraints in teaching.

It is concluded that prospective teachers face numerous and varied problems during their teaching practice at B. Ed (Hons) level in Kotli, AJ&K. These problems span personal, academic, institutional, and interpersonal domains, indicating the need for comprehensive interventions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Prospective teachers may create daily schedules to help allocate time for different activities. Seminars and workshops may be conducted before sending prospective teachers for teaching practice, and proper orientations must be provided.
2. The supervisor of teaching practice may provide practical training using a variety of teaching methods based on the requirements of their students.
3. Higher authorities may provide prospective teachers with some financial support for their upkeep during the teaching practicum period.
4. Transport officers may arrange proper transportation facilities for prospective teachers so that they can carry out teaching practice without any inconvenience.
5. School administration may provide the latest instructional materials and equipment such as projectors and digital boards. For this purpose, school administration may ensure to provide guidelines on how to use instructional materials.
6. School administration may set separate timetables for prospective teachers according to their needs. School staff and administration may involve prospective teachers in school activities

so that they may learn practical aspects of the real classroom/school environment.

7. School administration may provide practical training for lesson planning in advance and allow the use of available facilities. Cooperative teachers may provide proper guidelines about brainstorming and previous knowledge and conduct different activities related to brainstorming and previous knowledge.
8. Future researchers may use qualitative research designs to explore in-depth the problems faced by prospective teachers during teaching practice at B. Ed (Hons) level.
9. Future research may be conducted in other provinces of Pakistan to identify other problems faced by prospective teachers during teaching practice.

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