

## **School Internship Programme: Inclusion of Prospective Teachers to Become Professional**

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### **Abstract**

*School internship programme is a tool to develop professional teachers. Connecting prospective teachers globally utilizing teacher training programme will bring the learners' community together and reduce the distance among the knowledge seekers. The models of internship are performed in isolation (Chennat, 2014). Considering the current structure of the internship programme prescribed by the National Council for Teacher Education, the aim and objective of this study is to found various practical ways to collaborate prospective teachers through teacher training programs globally (Yadav, 2011). The study has focused on and discussed the training modules being practiced in India. The paper has suggested practical alternatives for teacher training modules using ICT to connect the prospective teachers globally.*

**Keywords:** *School Internship Programme, Teacher Training, Inclusion, Prospective Teachers and Professionalism*

### **Introduction**

The key to developing professionalism in a prospective teacher is 'practice'. There is a saying that, the more you practice the more you will achieve perfection. School internship is a continuous commitment towards the school for a fixed period is known as 'school internship', which includes a combination of theory and practice. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) defines an internship as 'a prolonged engagement with the school for defined time is called school internship'. Practica are held to build a connection between real-world classrooms and theories taught in the classroom by the subject specialists. Internship is a tool to make prospective teachers aware of real-world classroom scenario, and how the school as a whole runs on a daily basis containing various tasks and activities.

In this case, the role of the mentor teacher turns out to be critical. It is a time to understand and accept the fact that, school internship is not only about 'preparing lesson plans', 'executing prepared lessons in front of learners', and 'making journals based on the task performed in the classroom'.

The world is adopting technology rapidly in every possible manner, in almost all existing professions. This brings a fresh challenge for existing teachers as well as for prospective teachers to develop compatibility and ease with the use of technology. A development of comparison generates in the mind of students using technology. Online tutorials and tutors are just a click away from learners, knowingly or unknowingly learners start comparing their teachers from whom they learn in the classroom. So this is an ongoing test for teachers to sustain learners' interest in classroom teachings as technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are becoming a part of teaching methods. Those teachers who are working in such conditions where the infrastructure of the school lags in technology create a tough scenario for teachers to bring back the interest and attention of students in the classroom.

In India, the statutory body NCTE is regulating teacher education. As per NCTE, the in-depth engagement of prospective teachers in the internship shall build a clear understanding, proficiencies, and skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The conception of school internship has been changed now, where the practice is sharing an equal ratio of importance with theory. NCTE Regulations, 2009 has attempted to widen the coverage of practice-teaching. Enough of emphasis has been given to experience all the activities exercised in the school by providing various opportunities under the umbrella of 'school internship programme'.

Countries like Finland, Japan have multiple levels of internship structure for their prospective teachers, which clearly indicate the huge importance given to internships in preparing quality professionals. Whereas countries like India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh have different practices. Considering the availability of resources, population, several admissions, and availability of schools play a vital role in shaping the prospective teachers and so the nation.

As the world is shrinking every moment with the use of technology, it is easy to understand the significance of being aware and updated with time to cope up with future demand in various aspects of life.

### **Internship Scenario in Bangladesh, Japan, Finland, Sri Lanka, and India**

In India, as per NCTE Regulations, it is a must to have a professional teaching degree to teach in the school, whereas in a country like Sri Lanka, professional qualification is not required to teach in the classrooms.

A 'Study on the Professional Development of Teachers and Teacher Educators in Sri Lanka', done by the National Education Commission, Sri Lanka reveals that concerning to developed countries, pre-service teacher education is lagging in Sri Lanka and have an immense scope of improvement in the area of teacher education. Whereas in Finland, much emphasis have been given on rigorous training for the preparation of prospective teachers. In Sri Lanka, majorly three institutes facilitate teacher education programme. University of Colombo (UoC), Eastern University of Sri Lanka (EUSL), and The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) provide Teacher Education, wherein OUSL focuses majorly on Drama and Theatre. It is specially meant for B.Ed. in Drama and Theatre in collaboration with an organization other than the University. In the era of information and technology, one thing which makes a difference is, in teacher education programme UoC has made ICT compulsory whereas EUSL does not provide ICT as a core or elective course in its teacher education programme (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2016). The four-year B.Ed.

programme is common in all three universities with minor changes. First-year is common for all the enrolled prospective teachers. In the second and third year of programme the prospective teacher will choose from the given electives. In the fourth year, prospective teachers undergo the teaching training and learn about classroom management, content delivery, and various concerned aspects of the teaching profession.

In Finland, the duration of B.Ed. is 3-4 years or 4-5 years, which includes exhaustive teacher training under the observation of senior teachers and peers too. Two years of the internship have been dedicated in the four years of the degree programme of becoming a teacher. Teacher training happens at two levels; 1) for Elementary schools, 2) for secondary education. Two types of training take place. Initial training is known as 'harmony internship' under which observation of the classroom happens at multiple levels such as different grades, different curricular and co-curricular activities, in the second phase of teacher training known as 'basic internship' prospective teacher takes classes under the observation of supervisor and subject expert. In this phase, only remarks and criticized comments are shared with the prospective teacher. The aim behind going through such a process is to prepare prospective teacher for the real-world classroom, where a teacher encounters herself/himself with various kinds of difficulties occurs in the actual classrooms. (Baskan, Yilidz, and Tok, 2013). Practice teaching happens in practice schools affiliated with the education department. (Kansanen, 2003). Finland is known for its strong education system and for the importance given to prepare one of the world's best teachers.

Another study on Japan shows that every Japanese teacher undergoes training to achieve a teaching certificate based on their subject requirement. There are three levels of certification namely 1) advanced level 2) the first level and 3) the second level. To become a teacher one may choose from the given two directions: 1) a Two-year course at junior college and 2) a four-year course at a university level. The study also focuses on the difference in the training given in the United Kingdom and Japan. The theory remains the focus of training in Japan. A survey conducted on 100 teachers in Japan come up with the findings that, prospective teachers of language subjects have not undergone any training for teaching methodology, classroom management, or general educational practice. On asking upon the status of training one of the teachers explained that, "When I started teaching I just started with the methodology my teacher used in her classroom, taught me in my high school and showed me how to teach on teaching practices" (Lamie, 2006). The study also reflects upon the varied duration of teaching practices in the classroom, which contains 2 weeks teaching practices by 70% of total prospective teachers, 3-6 weeks teaching practices in the classroom by 26% of total prospective teachers, and maximum 7-9 weeks of teaching practices by 4% of the total number which is very nominal in total. The study also reveals that the teacher does 'help' prospective teacher in preparing lesson plans which means preparing a perfect lesson plan on paper (Lamie, 2006).

In India, the internship programme allows prospective teachers to flourish their teaching methodology and techniques in government and private schools at a time, whereas in Bangladesh teaching practice takes place in private schools only. The duration of the internship also differs; NCTE has fixed 20 weeks of internship, while in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh it lasts for about five weeks to eight weeks. (Yadav, 2011).

Considering all the subjects offered in the B.Ed. programme across the mentioned institutes, structure & duration of programme, each stage of internship, area covered in performing teaching practices, and developing the skills of teaching, there is no visible evidence of collaboration with

any of teacher education institutions with other teacher education institutions. Only Japan emerges as an exception; the Japanese teacher education system has been sending their prospective language teachers to the United Kingdom, native speakers of English to teach their prospective teacher a communicative language fluently along with its methodology of delivering lessons to the learners (Lamie, 2006). Teachers are the pillar of any nation. There is a proverb that when a teacher fails, their nation too. When the study is focusing on a school internship programme in the era of globalization, it is so much important to not see the noble profession of teaching in isolation and understanding the need for an hour to build the connectivity among the community of learners, the prospective teachers by brining reformation in the curriculum and structure of school internship, which is currently in practice.

### **Observations and Suggestions to Connect the Prospective Teachers Globally**

Building connection among various teacher education institutes and education faculties are important, as it opens up I) an opportunity to interact with the non-university member, II) to know the teaching culture, III) to understand the perspective on common curriculum across the globe, and IV) to learn from the unknown at their best. As various studies depict, some of the world's best practices are also lagging in connecting the teacher education institutions at any platform like Finland, Japan.

Bridging the institutions using the platform of the internship will be a huge step, which will open a window for a prospective teacher to explore, learn, un-learn, re-learn and widen the horizon of understanding in their respective areas of the teaching profession. Interaction with another prospective teacher, who is unknown to other prospective teachers, can provide the immense scope of discussion and learning without leaving the scope of 'being biased' or 'judgmental' towards each other.

### **Making ICT an Undivided Tool of Learning**

Information Communication and Technology (ICT) have become an integral part of life and profession across the globe. As ICT reflects, is an essential tool in the era of globalization and technology. Considering the gigantic information available on one click, it is essential to recognize its potential in bringing change and enhancing professional skills regardless of any area of any profession.

In today's time, irrespective of any profession, it is a need of an hour to develop the skills which are accepted and expected to flourish and contribute to the chosen profession. No technology can replace the teacher. But considering the tilt that the world is moving towards Artificial Intelligence (AI), the role of teacher or prospective teacher will change. So, enabling prospective teachers towards technology using ICT is an important component of the internship programme.

### **Connecting Teacher Education Institutions across the Globe**

There is a say that, a smile is a common language across the globe, and so does it implies the process of teaching & learning too. The teaching process is about having a passion to teach & learn both from the learners' end as well as from peers' and supervisors' end too. What matters the most to teach & learn is to have an enthusiasm and not merely the fluency in the language and knowledge of the content.

Language matters in communication but it cannot stop anyone from the process of learning. While linking the teacher education institutions across the globe language can be a barrier but using technology, enabling ICT in the process of learning, this barrier can be mitigated. Rationally and

culturally exchanging experiences and learnings of prospective teachers will develop a new perspective and will be helpful in understanding and knowing the context.

### **Providing a Platform to Commence Research in Collaboration with Non-Institutional Prospective Teacher**

Being in the profession of teaching and learning, having the mindset of ‘researcher’ is imperative for a prospective teacher as well as for the whole teaching community. To develop an attitude of ‘researcher’ it is essential to understand the concepts of research and taking hands-on experience by conducting research is the key to develop the mindset of ‘researcher’. Each child is different from another child. Understanding the need and learning methods of the child is the center of the teaching profession. Here, it is an institutions’ responsibility to create a conducive environment for prospective teachers, where two or more prospective teachers from different institutions can research on a single or similar topic to understand the content and context of the child, to understand the area prospective teacher needs to work upon. Characteristics like being less judgmental - less biased, and more enthusiastic to understand the child and their needs will be developed as a part of this process.

### **Creation of Expert Teaching Community to ‘to observe’ and ‘being observed’ by other Prospective Teachers and Subject Experts**

Based on the need and context, different teaching practice takes place across the globe. It is very common phenomena that, prospective teacher or learner receives guidance from their mentor or supervisor. The idea of ‘to observe’ and ‘being observed’ by other prospective teachers, mentors, subject experts, and/or supervisors of the department is a fresh way of learning.

Enabling ICT in the process of learning, getting feedback from the prospective teachers who are not from the same institution, mentor, subject expert, and supervisor who belongs to different institutions but commands a great level of knowledge and understating in the same area will be a huge benefit for the one who is ‘being observed’. In both the conditions where one prospective teacher ‘observes’ other prospective teachers and ‘being observed’ by their peers will contribute to reducing boundaries and bringing ‘teaching community’ together.

### **Understanding Emotions**

Emotions are the driving force behind any act done by an individual. If an individual decides to become a teacher, there is a driving force behind that decision. For any person, it is not possible to not have emotions. ‘Emotionlessness’ is a state of mind containing ‘nothing’. Teaching is an emotion-driven field. It enables prospective teachers to understand the ‘pre-conceived ideas on teachers & teaching’, ‘diverse culture across the globe’, and ‘personal nature of ‘self’ and of ‘others’. Connecting prospective teachers will widen the degree of acceptance; hence this will build the emotion of ‘oneness’ towards the teaching community globally. Strengthening community across the states is fuel for prospective teachers. Receiving recognition and respect globally inspires an individual to work with dedication and ultimately enhances the efficacy of prospective teachers.

### **Development of ‘Sense of Belongingness’**

There is a say that ‘the deeper the roots, the greater the fruits’. As various researches suggest, a sense of belongingness develops deeply when student-faculty, a community of prospective teachers’ interaction takes place in different forms such as formal – informal talks, social and/or academic talks. Certain kind of talk affects prospective teachers’ academic outcomes, their intellect, and development as an individual, level of satisfaction, and sense of belongingness. Classroom environment during regular classes and time invested during internship nurture the minds of

prospective teachers. The role of a mentor teacher, subject facilitator, and relationship with peers impacts both positively or negatively which results in their academic performance depends on the experiences prospective teacher obtains from the milieu.

### Conclusion

Various studies have shown that teaching practices are happening in isolation. Teacher education institutions are not attached to other teacher education institutions in the country or across the globe. In the era of globalization and technology, the construction of quality teachers is a need of an hour. Various educational regulatory bodies and agencies for children have approved blended learning models, flipped classroom methods, experiential learning methods, but to facilitate such teachings we are still lagging in bringing prospective teachers and teacher education institutions on one platform across the states and globe. Bridging the gap among the teacher education institutions will ultimately help to know each other academically and culturally which further strongly contributes to creating a 'quality teacher' for tomorrow's nation builders.

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