

**PRACTICE TEACHING IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN INDIA AND ABROAD:
SOME OBSERVATIONS**

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Practice teaching is one of the fundamental areas of a teacher education programme. Different theoretical studies are made by a teacher-trainee only to equip him for the role of a good teacher, who can teach his pupils effectively. The traits of a teacher include the ability to teach and in this respect practice teaching programme of a college of education plays a significant role in teacher preparation, if at all, such preparation can be made. Academicians¹ have expressed doubts about the effectiveness of the present practice teaching systems. They are of the view that these systems, in order to conform to bureaucratic structured stereotypes penalise innovation, which acts as a deaccelerating agent to the learning of the job in an effective manner. Stolurow² mentions two models—'Model the master teacher' and 'Master the teacher model' that are generally used in practice teaching situations. The most commonly practised system is 'Model the Master Teacher'. Stones and Morris³ describe the model in the following words.

The master teacher is the master craftsman and teaching practice is viewed as a process of initiation in which the master teacher's teaching skills, performance, personality, and attitudes are acquired by the student through observation, imitation and practice.

This approach is generally implemented rigorously resulting in a tendency to conservatism and traditionalism, Such a model necessarily implies that a pupil teacher is to adopt the teaching style even by going to the extent of changing his personality. The process is open to initiation but closed to the process of analysis and understanding of the teaching learning situation. The 'Master the Teaching Model' has been described by them in the following manner.⁴

Tutors and students together develop models out of their discussions of the theories of teaching and learning; the models are tested in teaching and learning situations and the results are evaluated.

This approach is more helpful in developing innovative attitudes in a pupil teacher and develop a personal and effective teaching style. No doubt, it is a time taking approach and costly too. This approach involves individualised instruction, flexible system, workshops, problem solving sessions, and practice teaching in varieties of methods applicable to teaching of a subject in different school situations. This also requires the continuous efforts on the part of teacher educators to keep them abreast of the modern developments in the field of education. But this is not acceptable to majority of teacher educators. In such a situation an attempt is being made here to analyse some of the experiences the author had in and outside the country with a view to suggest an alternate model.

Scottish System:

The Scottish system of teacher education is very much liked by the Professors of our country, and this prompted Prof. R.N. Mehrotra of the Central Institute of Education (presently Department of Education of Delhi University) to ask the author to utilise his leisure time in U.K. in studying the teacher education system. The city of Edinburgh has two teacher education colleges—Moray House College of Education and Craiglockhart College of Education and a Department of Education of the University of Edinburgh. The Colleges award their own diplomas. Besides, the Moray House administers a B.Ed., programme in collaboration with the university, which awards the Degree. The university has Ph.D., M.Phil. M.Ed. M.Sc. and Diploma in Community Education programmes. A Ph.D. student of the university Sister Dieodre, the Vice-principal of Craiglockhart College of Education is the method teacher of French subject. A brief account of the two practice teaching lessons that the author had observed with the Sister, is given below:

The lesson of Miss Murphy

Miss Murphy had been attached to St. Mary's School, Bathgate. On the day of our visit (March 8, 1979), she was to teach French by making children form stories out of six pictures. Her lesson plan had been made on a sheet of paper. It contained areas like previous knowledge, objective of the lesson, instructional materials, and procedure of presentation. It did not contain any questions. She had an Overhead projector for projecting the pictures drawn on a cellophane paper. There were six pictures. After doing some discussions on previous lesson, she started discussing the pictures one by one. She was adopting bilingual method of teaching French through English. She was explaining in French and writing the meanings of some French words being used by her on the chalk board. After explaining the pictures, the class was distributed into three groups, to frame stories out of these pictures. While the students were making discussions about the stories, she moved from one group to the other. When each group narrated the story in French, she helped them in proper pronunciation of various words, with the help of other students. The Sister sat for the whole period and went on noting down her remarks on a separate sheet of paper. At the end of the class, they moved to another room, where the Sister discussed her observations with the pupil teacher. One of the important observations was that the teacher should have given stress on more drilling of French words.

The lesson of Miss Mackinnon:

This lesson was also a French lesson for Third year class students at St. Augustine's School, Edinburgh. The teacher on the date of the visit (2.3.79), was to teach a composition lesson—'Voyage en France' (A Journey to France). Her lesson plan contained areas like-aims, preparation, presentation (the manner), consolidation, application and homework. She also adopted bilingual method in teaching this lesson. The Sister, at the end of the period discussed her observations with the pupil teacher. The observations included stress to be given on correction of mis-spelt words and the need for looking into seating arrangements.

Some general observations about the Scottish system of Practice Teaching:

1. The lessons are supervised by only method masters. A college teacher, who has not studied the subject is not competent to supervise the lesson in that subject.
2. All lessons are not supervised by a college method master. He generally, supervises 3 to 4 lessons of a pupil teacher.
3. Immediate feedback is provided to the pupil teacher. The college teacher observes for the whole period and discusses his reactions with the pupil teacher immediately after the lesson is over.
4. The lessons observed by the college method master are not graded immediately. An over all grade is assigned by him at the end of the practice teaching programme, only after taking into consideration the view of the co-operating teacher of the school to whom the pupil teacher had been attached.
5. Before entering into practice teaching phase, each pupil teacher passes through some micro-teaching situations to develop skill in different aspects of classroom teaching.
6. The pupil teachers are not provided with any particular format of the lesson plan. They prepare their lesson plans according to the topic and methodology being used. There are varieties in approaches.

Some Observations on German (Hamburg) System of Teacher Education:

In this system, the theoretical portion of the teacher preparation is covered by a pupil teacher, while he pursues graduate courses in the university. A certificate from the university regarding attendance of education classes, enable a pupil teacher to apply to the State Education Authorities to accept him as a teacher trainee for practical training. Practical training is spread over a period of one and half years of attachment to a school. The method subjects and other areas related to the development of teaching skills are covered during fortnightly study programmes for a day conducted at some centres, selected for the purpose. The University Department is concerned with teaching of theoretical portions, while the pupil teacher is a general degree course student in the university. Practical aspects of the teacher preparation are the responsibility of the State Education Department. Once a pupil teacher is attached to a school, he is

informed about three external examiners—one from the university, one from the school examination board and one from the department of education of the state. Besides these three examiners, the subject teacher of the school and the school headmaster also are the members of this panel. They individually or in groups visit the classes of the pupil teacher during the period of one and half years to give him suggestions for improvement. In each case, they sit-for the whole period and immediately provide feedback, to the pupil teacher. While assessing the eligibility of a pupil teacher for temporary post, the whole group sits for a complete lesson and discusses their reactions with this would be teacher, at the end of the lesson and then convey their decisions.

Incidentally, the author had not been able to observe any practice teaching lesson of German teachers, but had observed with a school inspector (Mr. Diercks) two lessons of a temporary teacher, who was seeking confirmation and a lesson of a headmaster of a smaller school, who was seeking appointment in a larger school. In that system, the performance of school teachers, in spite of a longer period of practical teaching, is similar to that of our teachers.

An Indian Practice Teaching System: *Government Training College, Sambalpur (Orissa)*

In the academic session, 1976-77 the programme of practice teaching had been conducted in the following manner:

1. Each method master delivered demonstration lessons in as many methods as possible for teaching a subject, so that pupil teachers realise merits and demerits of each of these methods.
2. Each pupil teacher delivered a criticism lesson in any one out of two method subjects opted for and had to deliver a supervised lesson in the other subject. In case of a supervised lesson, a college teacher is to remain present for the whole period.
3. Before the students were sent for practice teaching, the staff members discussed different skills of teaching in a general class in which the whole college was present.
4. Care was taken to ensure that the pupil teachers adopted different methods of teaching a subject and write lesson plans not in a fixed pattern, but in a style befitting to the approach taken for teaching the lesson.
5. The pupil teachers followed the scheme of work of the school.
6. The lesson plan book, supplied by the college contained various criteria of evaluation and space for writing remarks and giving grades on each area.
7. A proforma was developed for co-operating teachers, who remained present in the class for the whole period and sent their remarks mentioned on the said proforma to the college, through their headmasters. This was a daily programme. The proformas pertaining to different subjects were being sent daily to the method masters' for his perusal.
8. The college teacher, who had been allotted to a school, was supervising all lessons in different subjects irrespective of the consideration, whether he had studied the said subject atleast at the degree level or not. Incidentally, in the whole state of Orissa, there is not a single lecturer in education, who had studied Geography subject at his degree level.
9. Each method master met his pupil teachers at least once a week, to give feedback based on the observations of his own and of his colleagues and co-operating teachers.
10. Staff members met once in every week to discuss the problems related to practice teaching.
11. At the time of supervision, staff members assigned grades, which did not carry any value from University examination point of view. Later it was realised that grading all lessons, specially at the earlier stages, did not encourage majority of pupil teachers to improve their standards.
12. The weekly staff meetings revealed difference in approaches in the lesson planning. A case was found out, where two pupil teacher, had prepared identical plans of a topic, and two different lecturers awarded A and C grades on the area related to lesson plan. In another case science method master of M.Ed. class wanted that the pupil teachers teaching practical lessons, which cannot be covered in a period, should be allowed to do by splitting the lesson, whereas the lecturer teaching the method at B.Ed. argued for covering the lesson through 'chalk and talk' method in a period. These types of controversies revealed

the lack of scientific thinking on lesson planning. It also revealed the fact that the observations of teacher based on the student-teaching during the whole period was more comprehensive than the observations made by the college lecturers, who often gave remarks and grades, as they had to do so as part of their duty. This type of grading a student by observing his teaching for a few minutes is also found even at the final university examination stage of many teacher education systems.

The experiment mentioned above, made the schoolteachers remain present in the classroom, during the practice teaching of the pupil teachers. In earlier cases these periods were their leisure periods. This helped them realise the modern trends in teaching, being taught in training colleges. It increased the level of communication between the method master and the pupil teacher. At least there was feedback available, once in a week., if not, immediately after the class and this feedback did not exist in the earlier years.

Some Important Issues

The observations of the author made above on some practice teaching /stems in this country and elsewhere, makes one ponder over the following issues.

a) Can any educator supervise lesson in different subjects ?

To this question, the answer according to the author is no. This is not being done in foreign countries and in Regional Colleges and some other colleges of the country. Then the question arises about the feasibility of introduction of supervision by only a method master. This makes one accept the thesis that all lessons need not be supervised by college teachers. Some academicians are of the view that the standards of the schools are very low and by taking the views of teachers into consideration for evaluation of teaching competence is to indirectly underestimate the teacher education system. By asking a method master in a language subject to supervise a science lesson or vice versa, is not one going against the concept of science of education?

(b) Should an observer sit for whole period?

Any observation, to be meaningful has to be based on the presence of the observer for the complete lesson. Observations on the teaching performance based on three to four minutes of stay of the observer in that teaching learning situation may be biased. This may not be possible for large sized B.Ed. classes. Should a compromise be made? If so, to what extent and how?

(c) Should the feedback be delayed or provided immediately ?

Any expert of communication system will advocate for immediate feedback. Delayed feedback amounts to not providing any feedback. It also make the barriers in the communication process grow more strong, so that the content of the communication material gets changed. Thus as related to availability of time, should both the pupil teacher and the method master be made free for discussion, immediately after the class is over?

(d) Should there be a common lesson format?

Till to-day, in many training colleges, the pupil teachers are writing general procedures, which are exactly same for all lesson plans of different subjects. Sometimes, they employ their friends to copy this particular portion of the lesson plan from old plans. The moment, a lesson plan format is supplied by the method master, all pupil teachers tend to follow it. Rarely, method masters stress on the need to train pupil teachers in preparation of their own lesson plans. Is it not high time that the Indian teacher should think about the problem? What harm is there in asking the pupil teachers to develop their own lesson plans in the format suitable to them?

(e) Should there be any formula to relate the availability of method the admission of students in that method subject?

The problem of numbers has made the teacher education system dilute its standard. The author has found that he can effectively prepare about 20 pupil teachers. This brings in the question as to what should be maximum number of pupil teachers allotted to a method master? In that case, should admissions be made only according to the availability of method masters and their number in a college? Bush⁵ has made following observations:

You cannot mass produce highly competent professional teachers. The product must be custom built. The small group of four teachers with a local full-time team leader for a two-year period in the Teacher Corps has proven highly effective. This number might increase from six to eight but not beyond. The positive consequence of this small individually tailored training is unequivocal. The remarks are also applicable to our situations. Even if to limit the number in a group to as low as eight, one should try to maximum number that he can handle effectively.

These are some of the issues. There are also other issues. ! be any attempt to analyse the standards of the schools and the situations and the standards of pupil teachers and consider these allotment of a pupil teacher to a school ? Should there be any attempt to find out the future employment possibility of a pupil teacher and provide him practical teaching in a rural or urban school? Is it necessary to take a stock of the old members and their place of work and bring them again to the teacher training institution for a short time to find how effective they have been in implementing the ideas they learnt in the colleges of education? Will this not lead to an integrated approach to the teacher training programme and in that case how to bring in such types of integration? Should not situations be provided for field visits to different types of schools and institutions practicing ideals of Indian educators like Gandhiji, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo etc.? These are some of the innumerable problems that have faced teacher education, which need to be thrashed out.

A Suggested Model

In conclusion the author presents a model of practice teaching for the considerations of the readers.

1. Adoption of schools for a block teaching practice for 10 weeks may be the most suitable one.
2. Each method master may give demonstration lessons on all possible methods of teaching that subject. Where criticism lessons are held, the teacher trainees may be distributed in different methods covered in a subject.
3. A method master will be eligible to supervise lessons only in his method subject.
4. Admissions to a particular method will be restricted to 20 pupil teachers per a method master.
5. All lessons need not be supervised by a college teacher. The views of co-operating teachers on each lesson delivered by the pupil teacher is to be taken into consideration and discussions of these observations be made with the pupil teacher, before the college teacher arrives at a particular evaluating grade for the pupil teacher.
6. In all cases of observations by the college teacher, the observations should be for the complete lesson and discussions be made immediately after the lesson is over, with the pupil teacher.
7. The pupil teachers should finish the theoretical portions of their method subjects before embarking upon practice teaching.
8. The college should ensure that minimum levels of skills like chalk board writing, questioning, etc. have been attained by the pupil teachers, before they are sent for practice teaching to schools so that less harm is done to the school students.

References

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