

A Study on the Experiences of Teacher Trainees of E.T.E during their School Experience Programme

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Abstract: School experience programme during teacher education programs is the preparedness for the teaching profession. It acts as an interface between student life and real members of teaching profession. It gives a chance to trainees to experience actual teaching and learning environment. In the present study the experiences of hundred E.T.E teacher trainees of self-financed institute of Delhi during their school experience programme has been explored. Semi structured interviews with all teacher trainees were used to collect data and content analysis was applied on them. The result is that despite positive growth and experiences during S.E.P, teacher trainees faced challenges which affected their perception of teaching as a profession. Based on the finding of this study, measures are suggested on how to improve school experience programme in the coming time.

Keywords: Elementary Teacher Education (E.T.E), School experience programme (S.E.P), Teacher Trainees.

I. Introduction

School experience programme is a mandatory and an important component of E.T.E curriculum which train the prospective teachers for elementary level teaching (Affiliated to S.C.E.R.T).School experience programme is that single component of teacher preparation which majorly contributes to the development of teaching skills among teacher trainees. During S.E.P a teacher trainee gets the opportunity for hands on experience in teaching before actually getting into the teaching profession. The term school experience program represents the variety of experiences to which teacher trainees are exposed when they work in real classrooms and schools. It provides the prospective teachers the opportunities to become socialized in teaching profession. The duration of School experience programme in E.T.E programme is of 40 days and accounts for 100 marks (passing 50%).The teacher trainees need to have hundred percent attendance during S.E.P. The detailed bifurcation of S.E.P is as follows:

School subjects	No.of Lesson Plans	Practical work
Teaching of Hindi	15	Neighborhood Survey, Peer Group observation, Teacher's Dairy, Micro Lesson plans, Achievement Test record and School profile
Teaching of Maths	15	
Teaching of Science	15	
Teaching of S.S.T	15	
Teaching of Work Experience	5	
Teaching of Arts	5	
Teaching of Health education	5	

The teacher trainees are also expected to conduct the assembly daily and coordinate different co-curricular activities as the school demands. The teacher trainees are allotted different schools in which their teacher educators as supervisor have to observe them during the school teaching and give them feedback orally and in written. As the whole S.E.P programme encompasses a range of experiences, due to which it also creates a mixture of anxiety, excitement, frightening experiences for the teacher trainees. Thus the present study identifies the good and bad experiences of E.T.E teacher trainees during their School experience programme.

1.2 Research Objective:

The objective of the research is to study the experiences of the E.T.E teacher trainees during their school experience programme.

II. Research Approach

The approach of the present study was qualitative. The data collection methods were document analysis, observations and semi-structured interviews with the research participants. The data was analyzed through content analysis.

III. Results and Discussion

The researchers identified the major themes after content analysis of data generated through semi structured interviews of E.T.E teacher trainees. Each of these themes is explained in the following section:

3.1 Ability of Teacher trainees to translate theory into practice:

The teacher trainees indicated that the theory they learned in the elementary teacher education course had prepared them well for school experience programme. For example, they have learned about the various teaching methods, accountability and duties of teachers during their theory classes.

Most of trainees said although they had anxiety before starting of school experience programme, but after they started to teach in the classroom, they found school experience programme very interesting and rewarding because they were able to apply what they have studied.

One teacher trainee commented, "I discovered that the skills like reinforcement and stimulus variation are the most important skills which can do wonders for creating favourable classroom environment and active participation of students"

Another teacher trainee said, "Although I have studied about the various teaching methods in theory, but when I practically taught the students, I was able to choose and associate the topic with the appropriate teaching method."

The teacher trainees although found themselves theoretically prepared for school experience programme, but they said that it was not easy to teach because the learners were not co-operative and faced language barriers which affected their teaching performance.

3.2 School Experience Schedule:

All teacher trainees pointed out that school experience programme started too late in the year when most school teachers were on the verge of completing the syllabus and were busy doing revision in preparation for formative assessment.

Teacher trainees reported that it would be better if they only have to visit the school during the school experience programme and don't have to visit the college in between as it becomes very inconvenient for them and not able to make balance between the two.

3.3 Relationship between Teacher educators, Class teacher and Teacher trainees:

Each teacher educator has to supervise 20 teacher trainees. The assigned teacher educator has to assume a multi-faceted role of being guide supervisor, counsellor, teacher and a critic. The overall impression of the teacher educators given by the teacher trainees was fairly positive. The trainees said that the teacher educators were supportive and always willing to help. They also expressed that their supervisors always gave them valuable advice and shared their skills and experiences.

One teacher trainee has this to say about her teacher educator as supervisor: I am grateful to my supervisor. She supervised my lesson plan of all the subjects regularly. She used to write the comments on my lesson plan and after the period she used to discuss my strength and weakness'.

Another one affirmed: Our teacher educator is one of the reason I enjoyed my school experience programme. She respects me a lot and never scolds on my weaknesses in front of the students.

As part of the school experience programme, not only the teacher educators but the school teacher of the class allotted to each teacher trainee had to supervise the teacher trainee too.

According to a student: We worked very well with the class teacher. She assisted me on how to make a lesson plan and disciplining learners. The teacher sits in class whilst I am teaching and this helps to maintain discipline. Despite the above positive remarks by majority of respondents other respondents expressed negative experiences regarding their class teachers as supervisors. The respondents indicated that they didn't get any support from the school teachers. Some respondents saw it as exploitation and reported that the class teachers imposed exorbitant demands on teacher trainees in terms of workload.

One teacher trainee commented: When the class teacher got to know that for two months the teacher trainee would be taking their class, she became a free bird. She just gave me the textbooks, showed me how many chapters to be taught and never come to class. I feel the teacher should still take the responsibility of her class and not throw everything at me. I don't have a problem but I strongly feel that as a class teacher, she should be available to provide the support and guidance because I am still learning.

Another teacher trainee stated: Although the old aged teachers helped us on everything we asked about, but the teachers of the same age or a bit elder, used to behave a bit snobbish towards us.

Few respondents commented: Some class teachers exhibited unprofessional conduct and engaged in unprofessional acts like, absenting themselves from duty, reporting late, sending pupils on personal errands even during lessons and used to scold us if we use activity method in spite of lecture method as they focus on syllabus coverage and not concept clarity.

3.4 Orientation of teacher trainees with the school:

Respondents were introduced to the principal of the school by teacher educator. But the principal did not introduce the teacher trainees to other staff members. After the principal, the teacher trainees just got introduced to the time table In-charge for their periods. Some respondents felt a sense of alienation. One student teacher remarked: "We were never introduced to staff. This affected us psychologically because we felt like strangers. We never felt that sense of belonging".

Such feeling of alienation resulted in panic and a lack of self confidence, which in turn reduced the effectiveness of school experience programme and negatively affected student teacher's attitude towards the teaching profession. On the other hand, a good reception from the headmasters and teachers contributed to a positive attitude towards teaching as confirmed by the statement by one of the teacher trainees who had received a good reception: We introduced ourselves to the staff they took us to the classes and we introduced ourselves to the learners. Learners were told to respect us. We were introduced as teachers not as teacher trainees and this to a certain extent influenced the way other teachers and learners related to us.

Another student teacher affirmed that I was given a warm welcome. I feel as if I have been there for a whole year.

3.5 Rapport building with the school staff:

Teacher trainees commented: I felt that other teachers were taking me as a tool of convenience as they would just send me to do things such as taking cups to the staffroom and controlling learners in the corridors.

Other teacher trainee said: We were not respected as colleagues and not taken seriously. The teachers used to watch us as if we will teach wrong content to the students.

3.6 Involvement in non-scholastic activities:

Teaching involves many experiences and teacher trainees are required to get involved in all aspects of the school. The school were requested to provide student teachers with the opportunity to become "fully integrated" teachers by allowing students teacher participation in all school activities.

We were asked to conduct the assembly on rotational basis. Every day in the morning, the teacher trainee have to prepare the students for "thought of the" & inspiring speech on educational topic. We used to supervise the students during their lunch. My class teacher used my creative ideas to decorate the corridor bulletin board. We assisted the school staff in the organization of annual day function.

3.7 Classroom discipline:

The teacher trainees experienced a deterioration of moral values in schools. The present study also noted that discipline was almost nonexistent in most schools.

In contrast to above negative responses, respondents from one school said that learners were well behaved and that they actively participated in the class activities: "learner didn't respect us as teachers, since we are student teachers, we don't have the authority to punish them."

3.8 Assessment of student's performance by teacher trainees:

Teacher trainees admitted that they found it very difficult to assess the student's performance. The teacher trainees said that the class teacher restricted them to assess the students from traditional methods of class test and no assessment technique as specified in CCE should be used. The teacher told the teacher trainee to concentrate on syllabus coverage and that assessment of learners is not their work.

3.9 Resources to facilitate teaching learning process:

The result obtained from the teacher trainees with regard to resources revealed that the school have optimum to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Learners have textbooks, which made teaching effective. One respondent remarked that this school have a good library and there were enough textbooks to refer.

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

1. The findings indicate that student teachers view school experience programme as an important component in their training because it exposes them to the actual teaching and learning environment in which they can actualize their theoretical knowledge gained during training.

2. It also gives teacher trainees an opportunity to determine whether the appropriate career choice has been made or not. Teacher trainee felt that the E.T.E course has prepared them for the school experience programme. However despite the thorough preparation, students were faced with challenges which significantly affected their ability to accrue maximum benefits from the school experience programme.
3. The school experience programme at the end of the year was considered as inappropriate by the school personnels as well as by the teacher trainees. It is therefore recommended that the teaching programme timetable should be designed in such a way that it does not coincide with key school terms such as towards or during the months of June and October when teachers are preparing students for crucial examinations.
4. Also training teachers had to play a dual role of being teachers in schools and students as college. This put tremendous pressure on the students teachers and rendered them ineffective both as teachers and as students.
5. While some respondents indicated that school staff was supportive and always willing to share their valuable advice and skills, others felt exploited and unsupported by them. Furthermore teacher trainees were not always made to feel welcome and were not generally respected by other staff members. Student teachers were often excluded from many school activities and were made to feel insignificant which greatly demoralize them.
6. To minimize the problem of student teachers going to schools where they are made to feel excluded and insignificant, the higher education institutions should have profile of each school and only those schools should be allotted to teacher's trainees which have shortage of permanent teachers.
We have attempted to highlight the actual experiences of teacher trainees during S.E.P as the experiences have been both positive and negative, thus the Teacher education courses has scope for lot of improvement.

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