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A Phenomenological Study on the Lived Experiences of Student Teachers During Their School Internship

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Abstract

School internship is termed as one of the most important parts of any teacher education programme as this is the phase when the student teachers apply the knowledge and skills they had acquired from the college or institute of teacher education for the first time in real life situations. The study focuses on the real-life experiences of the secondary level student teachers from different institutes of teacher education in the Kerala state of India. Ten student teachers from three different institutes of teacher education were interviewed during their school internship. The interview focused on the meanings they, as student teachers attributed to the experience of a school internship. The interview data were analysed with the help of qualitative data analysis techniques. The major themes emerged after the analysis of data analysis were: (i) the first days of the internship were not pleasant for the student teachers (ii) not all the major roles of the regular teachers are assigned to the student teachers during internship (iii) social constructivist methods don't work in the real classrooms (iv) visits by the supervisor teachers were not frequent enough (v) mentor teachers are helpful, cooperative and friendly (vi) student teachers felt like teachers and got recognized as teachers during school internship (vii) ICT facilities in the schools are not enough and accessible (viii) school internship did not affect daily routine.

Keywords: School Internship, Lived experiences, Student Teachers

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Introduction

The Context of the Study

School internship is one of the most important components of any pre-service teacher education programme. This is the phase where the student teachers apply the acquired skills and knowledge in real classroom situations for the first time. The challenges experienced and the strategies adopted to overcome these challenges will ultimately decide the quality and competence of the student teachers. The knowledge base required for becoming a teacher including educational psychology, philosophical tenets of education, different classroom strategies, methods of teaching, classroom management and time management strategies, etc. will usually be acquired by the student teachers during the orientation they get from the teacher education institutions or colleges. But the ability to apply this knowledge and skills in real life situations is entirely different and this is where some of the student teachers face difficulties. Learning how to transform theoretical knowledge into practice is the major purpose of school internship in teacher education.

School Internship of Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) Students in India: An Overview

National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), India has overhauled the teacher education programmes at the graduation and post-graduation levels in India in the year 2014 in order to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. The long-awaited move of extending the duration of these courses from one year to two years was the most significant. An extension of the duration of the programmes resulted in complete restructuring also. New courses like Language across Curriculum, courses for Enhancing Professional Competencies, Gender, School and Society and Creating an Inclusive School were welcome additions to the graduate level programmes (Bachelor of Education – B. Ed). Also, the period of school internship for B. Ed students was extended to 14 weeks which previously ranged from 5 to 6 weeks. This modification resulted in an extended period of exposure for the student teachers to the actual school environment helping them acquire a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of schools.

National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) further emphasized the importance of school internship for B. Ed students by releasing a framework and guidelines document for school internship in the year 2016. The total period of field engagement was decided to be 20 weeks, of which 4 weeks were to be in the first year and 16 weeks in the second year. Out of the 16 weeks allotted for school internship in the second year, two weeks are to be spent for community works and the remaining 14 weeks for teaching and related activities in the school. The guidelines recommend the student teachers to spend 80% of their school internship in government schools and the remaining 20% in private schools. They are also advised to get exposure at secondary and primary level classes or secondary and higher secondary classes. The guidelines also emphasise the need for student teachers to undergo internship in urban, rural as well as tribal schools. However, in any circumstances, the student teachers are not to be sent to more than two schools.

Experiences of Student Teachers from around the World

Ahonen, Pyhalto, Pietarinen, and Soini (2015) analysed student teacher's learning patterns and found that although there were differences between student teachers' motivation to learn and their approach to learning, most student teachers held a deep or strategic approach to learning and had internal reasons for studying. Surprisingly, however, the majority of student teachers had adopted a passive and adaptive action strategy, meaning that they adapted their actions according to the situation and silently accepted the pedagogy being practiced. Only a few students reported using transformative action strategies and some reported that they occasionally influenced the pedagogical settings or said that they were able from time to time to influence critical incidents during their educational journey. Some elements of the learning pattern were more frequently related. For instance, internal motivation, active strategy use and a deep approach to learning were often combined with a coherent conception of teaching. On the other hand, external reasons, a surface approach to learning, and difficulties in learning skills in terms of approach or actions strategy were often related to a fragmented conception of teaching.

The major concerns and issues of student teachers during internship were found to be problems related to classroom management and class discipline, lesson planning, managing relief teaching (substitution), lack of facilities, equipment and teaching-learning resources provided in the schools, disruption of lesson due to co-curricular activities, problems related to internship administration and management (Ali, Othman & Karim, 2014).

Liu (2015) studied the effects of self-perception on self-learning among student teachers and found that student teachers' perceived teacher roles influence their self-concept but role perceptions have no significant effects on self-learning activities. Lacking actual school experience, student teachers are unable to determine their own learning necessities, aims, and learning sources. Hence, teacher education students cannot transfer perceived teacher roles into actual educational activities, resulting in the difficulty of setting specific learning tasks. They do, however, acquire images of teacher roles to shape their self-concept as teachers. Thus, it is reasonable that self-concept may be only an image reflecting on specific roles, did not directly influence self-learning activities. The internship is thus a phenomenon of importance which needs to be studied in detail.

Lived Experience

'Lived experience' is a term closely associated with the philosophical approach as well as the qualitative research method Phenomenology. Phenomenology as a school of thought is considered as a philosophical movement against the objective nature of scientific inquiry. Eckartsberg (1986) argued that it is the human condition with which research in the social sciences concerns itself. Human science inquiry is essential for the study of human practices because the experience of our everyday lives is where knowledge begins. Phenomenological research focuses on the meanings of human experiences in situations as they spontaneously occur in the course of daily life. A phenomenon can be an emotion, relationship, or an entity such as a programme, an organization, or a culture. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenologists ask the question: "What is the *essence* of the experience of this phenomenon for those who experience it?" Phenomenology seeks to expose the implicit structure and meaning of

such experiences. It is the search for the "essence of things" that cannot be revealed by ordinary observation.

It will thus be very important and useful to gain an insight into the lived experiences of student teachers during the internship, which is considered to be an important stage of teacher preparation. This insight will throw light to the facts related to the ways in which student teachers experience internship and how it affects them professionally, socially and personally.

Need and Significance of the Study

Review of related literature revealed various aspects of internship of student teachers, like issues and concerns of student teachers, expectations and challenges of student teachers and factors related to procedural, managerial, psychological, instructional, professional, cultural and even political facets (Salem al-amarat, 2011; Okobia, Augustine & Osagie, 2013 & Ali, Othman & Karim, 2014). But it was noted that most of the studies especially those carried out in India were based on quantitative data for analysing student teachers' experiences.

Cronbach (1975) *claims that statistical research is not able to take full account of the many interaction effects that take place in social settings.* He gives examples of several empirical "laws" that do not hold true in actual settings to illustrate this point. He further states that "the time has come to exorcise the null hypothesis," because it ignores effects that may be important, but that is not statistically significant. But qualitative inquiry accepts the complex and dynamic quality of the social world.

After a thorough review of related literature I perceived the need for analysing the lived experiences of student teachers during the internship to gain an in-depth understanding of their thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and imaginations to illuminate details and seemingly unimportant aspects within experiences that may be left out.

Statement of the Problem

McIntyre, Byrd, and Foxx (1996) argued that despite overwhelming positive feeling about the efficacy of field experiences, *what occurs during the field experience is more important than the length of the experience.* Thus focus should be rather on understanding how the internship affects individual student teachers and why do such effects take place.

Phenomenology is concerned with the living world of human experience as it is lived. From identification of the experience of phenomena, a deeper understanding of the meaning of that experience is sought. This occurs through an increasingly deeper and layered reflection by the use of rich descriptive language. Hence, the present study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of student teachers during their internship.

Objectives of the Study

The study has been designed with the following g objectives.

1. To gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of student teachers during the internship.
2. To analyse how internship affects the way a student teacher teach, learn, and live.

Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature. It relies heavily on the subjective perspectives of the research participants in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. The ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects of the present study are thus founded on the postmodern theories related to social constructivism. The methodology adopted for the study is briefly described as follows.

Research Design

I have decided to use primary qualitative data for the purpose of the study. The design of the study is Hermeneutic Phenomenology, which is considered as a philosophical approach as well as a qualitative research method. Langdridge (2007) defines phenomenology as a discipline that ‘aims to focus on people's perceptions of the world in which they live in and what it means to them; a focus on people's lived experience.’

Hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the living world or human experience as it is lived and how the researcher obtains thick descriptions about firsthand accounts of experiences of phenomena from the researched and interprets it through a process called hermeneutic cycle. Wilson & Hutchinson (1991) suggested that the focus of phenomenology is toward illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within the experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding. Smith (1997) explains it as a research methodology aimed at producing rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of selected phenomena in the lifeworld of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively.

One on one semi-structured in-depth interview is the method used to collect data from the respondents.

Sampling Design

In the study, maximum variation sampling, one of the major purposive sampling techniques is used for selection of samples required for the study. Adequate consideration is given for gender, graduation subject, and type of management of the institution to ensure maximum variation. Ten student teachers were selected as samples for the study. The study population consists of student teachers from different colleges of teacher education undergoing internship at the secondary school level in different schools in Kerala. The details about the gender, type of management of the institution and optional subjects of the student teachers interviewed for the study are given in table 1.

Table 1. Gender, Type of Management of the Institution and Optional Subjects of the Respondents

Respondent Sl. No.	Gender	Type of Management of Institution	Optional Subject
1	Female	Unaided - Self Financing	Social Science
2	Female	Unaided - Self Financing	Social Science
3	Female	Unaided - Self Financing	Social Science
4	Female	Unaided - Self Financing	Social Science
5	Male	Government	Language
6	Male	Government	Language
7	Male	Government Aided	Science
8	Female	Government Aided	Language
9	Female	Government Aided	Language
10	Male	Government	Science

Tools and Techniques for Data Collection

Interview Guide specially prepared and validated through discussions with experts from the field of education, philosophy, and anthropology is used to collect data from the student teachers undergoing internship. The items for the interview guide were prepared based on the extensive review of previous research findings as well as related literature and official documents by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).

Analysis of Data

Collected data is analysed as per the Framework for Qualitative Data Analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). They define analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: *Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion drawing/Verification*. Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in the transcriptions. This includes writing summaries, coding, teasing out themes, making clusters, making partitions and writing memos. Data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organizes data in such a way that ‘final’ conclusions can be drawn and verified.

Miles and Huberman (1994) define Data Display as an organised, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action. The data display includes matrices, charts, graphs and networks designed to assemble organised information into an immediately accessible, compact form so that the analyst can see what is happening and either draw justifiable conclusions or move on to the next step of analysis the display suggests may be useful.

The third stream of data analysis suggested by them is conclusion drawing and verification. From the beginning of the data collection itself, the analyst starts to decide what things mean – is noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions. Even if these conclusions are held lightly, maintaining openness and skepticism, they may become increasingly explicit and grounded as data analysis proceeds. These conclusions are also verified as analysis proceeds. Verification can vary from a fleeting second thought crossing the analyst's mind during writing too lengthy argumentation and review among colleagues for ‘intersubjective consensus’. Miles and Huberman (1994) present these three streams of activity – Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing/Verification – as interwoven before, during and after data collection in parallel form, to make up the general domain called ‘analysis’ The Interactive Model suggested by them is shown as figure 1.1.

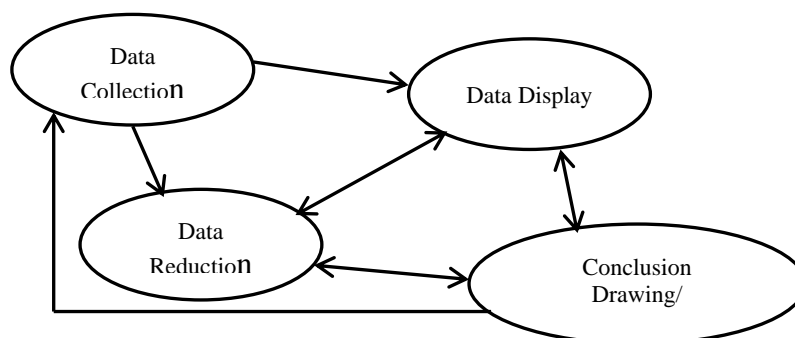


Figure 1.1: Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model

Source: Miles & Huberman (1994)

Researcher's Bias

Creswell (2005) opined that the personal views of the researcher can never be kept separate from the interpretation of data. It is more so for phenomenological research, where the researcher himself/herself acts as the tool for data collection to a great extent. Husserl (1962) suggested the process of bracketing to separate researcher's biases, prejudices, pre-notions and concepts related to the phenomenon under study. It is generally termed as phenomenological reduction or 'epoche' (Greek word for Abstention). As a former teacher educator, educational administrator and professional social worker, I had several pre-conceptions, prejudices, and pre-notions about the phenomenon under study. My perceptions of the experiences of student teachers during the internship are influenced by these past experiences.

Because of my background and the fact that I performed in-depth interviews with the researched, I am the ideal person to reflect upon and extract meaning from the data collected. I acknowledge the following biases:

- i. I am a teaching professional with good academic record, who considers all academic works serious and any lapses from the part of student offensive.
- ii. I prefer proper use of instructional technology for effective classroom teaching and support the use of ICT in the classrooms.
- iii. I make use of ICT facilities heavily for teaching, research and other academic work.
- iv. I take responsibility for own work and expect students also to do the same.
- v. I avoid personal relationships interfere with professional work and expect the students also to be the same.
- vi. I, being the son of the parents, both of whom were teachers, have a heavily positive attitude towards the teaching profession.
- vii. I strongly favour the timely guidance and support given to the student teachers by the mentor teachers as well as supervising teachers during the internship.
- viii. I find it unfavorable to use outdated teaching-learning aids in the classrooms instead of the latest technologies.
- ix. (ix) I favour warm relationships between the student teacher, mentor teacher, and the supervising teacher.
- x. (x) I don't believe in corporal punishments and believe that all students learn if properly motivated.

Results and Discussions

Analysis of the interview data revealed several dominant perspectives and deviant perspectives. The major perspectives revealed through rigorous data analysis are listed.

Female student teachers joined for B.Ed. course not because of an innate interest towards the teaching profession

Six female student teachers were interviewed as part of the study. Apart from one female student teacher, all others admitted that they had chosen the B. Ed course not because of an innate interest towards the profession. The reasons varied from *parental*

influence, job security, comfort related to the job and even demand in the matrimony market. This is how one female student teacher responded.

“ My father was very much interested. He wanted us to have a better education than he received. And he thinks that the teaching profession is a very good profession. My education is actually my father's ambition. My father is a graduate. I had a plan to join for some professional course after completing higher secondary. But, my father told me that I need to know what it is like to study in a college and I joined for a degree in the same college where he studied. And then I did my PG. My father himself got me admission for B. Ed also.”

The first career preferences of these teachers included the police force, nursing, and journalism. This revelation throws light on to the fact that the profession in which females are the brutal majority, may suffer because of female teachers' primary motivation for choosing the teaching profession.

The first days of the internship were not pleasant for the student teachers

Most of the student teachers who were interviewed reported that they did not have good experiences during the first days of internship. Classroom management, issues related to teaching methods/strategies, pressure from the part of mentor teacher to complete allotted portions, etc. were considered to cause difficulties for the student teachers during the first days. Female teachers reported that they had used a sort of emotional blackmailing to control the students. One female student teacher shared an experience when her supervising teacher who visited the school for class observation in between her class due to disruptions from the part of students. Extreme cases of indiscipline were also reported. A male student teacher shared his experience as –

“The first day went without any trouble. Next day onwards, the students were much undisciplined. They moved around in the class. They would leave the class and enter the class without permission and would fight with each other. I asked them to be quiet very calmly and when they did not listen to me shouted. I could not start my lesson that day because of disciplinary issues. I felt depressed.

..... All the trainee teachers who went to this class had the same experience. They all said that the students don't give even the value of a dog for trainee teachers. They will be spitting at each other and calling out swear words.”

Some student teachers *reported a kind of depression or a feeling of worthlessness during these first days as a result of the treatment given by the students.* Only three among the ten interviewed students reported that they were happy with the way things went during the first days. The support and guidance from the part of mentor teachers were of very much importance during these days. *Those student teachers who were introduced to the students as a new teacher instead of a student teacher by the mentor teacher had a completely different experience during the first days of the internship.* The student teachers who had regular support and guidance from the part of mentor teachers coped up comparatively well also. Thus, it is observed that the support, guidance, and recognition from the part of mentor teachers are very important for student teachers during the internship.

Roles and responsibilities of a regular teacher are not assigned to the student teachers

The student teachers reported that even if the roles and responsibilities performed by the regular teachers in the school were similar to those mentioned in the textbooks and curriculum, it was difficult for the student teachers to perform all those. They pointed out *the lack of time to interact freely with the students, pressure from the part of the mentor teachers to finish the portions allotted and attitude of the mentor teachers as the main reasons for this*. The major duties assigned to the student teachers, apart from classroom teaching, teachers included works related to serving of mid-day meals, discipline duties, and examination duties. Still, some student teachers shared their experiences of giving some sort of counseling and guidance for students. All the student teachers were aware of the importance of being a good friend of the students and they have tried to practice it also. A female student teacher shared her experiences as –

“..We have to keep a distance, but still need to keep good relationships with the students.

I had a significant experience. There was a naughty boy named X in the eighth standard. He used to be very restless in the class. I asked his name on the first day itself and started calling him by his name and enquired what was troubling him whenever he created some problems. He became quiet and disciplined from the very next day itself. Another student who was coming from nearby his house later told me that X thinks very highly of me and he studies the lessons taught by me well. That was great recognition for me.

.....There was another student in the ninth standard. He was detained in the same class for a second year. I talked to him and told him that he was a good boy. And asked him to meet me and clarify any doubts regarding the lessons. He also showed significant improvements. These are the happiest moments I had here so far.”

A very significant observation by a student teacher was that the *mentor teacher can have some ego clash with the student teacher if the students get more attached to them*. He reported that one of his senior students told him about an experience where the students got more attached to the student teachers than the regular teacher. As a result, the parents who visited the school to inquire about the performance of the students directly came to the student teacher instead of meeting the regular teacher. This incident had created some problems. So, the student teacher is very careful not to offend the regular teacher and limits his interactions with the students to academic matters only.

Constructivist methods don't work in the actual classrooms

The biggest revelation of all for the student teachers during the internship was that the constructivist activity oriented method of teaching which they have learned from the teacher education institutions/colleges and asked to practice in the class is not practical. They had pointed out several reasons for this. *Class strength, lack of proper infrastructure, shortage of time, pressure from the mentor teacher to finish portions for examinations and lack of knowledge of the students about prerequisites were the major ones*. As a result, the student teachers resort to the lecturing and explanation methods. Those who try to use constructivist activity oriented method find it difficult to complete

one lesson plan in one period and they complete the remaining part in the next class. One of the student teachers shared the experience with trying to practice the constructivist activity oriented teaching method in the classroom as –

“The class is very much congested. Grouping for group activity is very difficult. The students could not complete even one activity when I gave it to them on the day my supervising teacher came for observation. Then the teacher told me not to waste time for such things, but focus on completing portions. Even if I give the activity as homework, some students do it; some will copy it from others.

Constructivism is not possible here. We are asked to complete the portions for examinations. So, I explain the lessons and ask them to read and ask doubts. I write the notes on the blackboard. I take copies of the notes and give one copy each for one bench so that they can copy it.”

All the student teachers were of the opinion that, given the class strength, infrastructure, class time and the contents, it is very difficult or almost impossible to practice constructivist method in the classrooms.

Demonstration classes and criticism classes helped get ready for the school

All the student teachers were of the opinion that demonstration classes and criticism classes they had from the college before the commencement of the internship helped them a lot. *Criticism classes helped them correct their mistakes whereas demonstration classes helped them understand how good teachers handled a regular classroom.* Even if the student teachers could understand how to practice activity based constructivist method in the classroom by observing the classes of expert teachers, they were of the opinion that its application in a real classroom situation is difficult. A male student teacher responded –

“Some demonstration classes were based on constructivism. They repeated a lesson which was already taken. So, they could do it very effectively. But, we understood that it is not completely practical when we introduce a new concept in the classroom when we observed classes during acclimatization. There won't be adequate materials in the schools for the following constructivism. If we want to take the students to the lab, there is not enough facility in the lab. I and another trainee took it up as action research. But, the lab did not have benches for the students to sit. We wanted to change the lab into a classroom so that when we want to do experiments we can take the students to the lab and take the class from there. But, since it is a government school, getting benches and such things immediately was not possible.”

This understanding or perception regarding the activity-oriented constructivist method might have been a reason for the student teachers failing to use it in the classrooms effectively. Still, the student teachers reported that they could learn a lot of techniques related to class management, communication and engaging students from the classes of expert teachers which they observed.

Apart from one student teacher, all the others who were interviewed reported experiences related to criticism classes to be very positive and useful. It helped them correct their mistakes related to *the way they communicated with the students, tempo of the class, time management, using learning aids and movement in the classroom*. But still, some drawbacks of the criticism classes were pointed out by a student teacher.

“ For criticism class, there would be only fifteen students, our supervising teacher also would be there. They are taken to our college and their gangs would be broken. So, they will not create any challenges which they may create in the actual class....

....We would look at the expressions of the students and try to change the style as per the feedback. But, the supervisor would say that we are deviating from the lesson plan. Freedom to modify and improve is not there.”

Getting proper constructivist criticisms during criticism classes helps the student teachers. But, one student teacher reported having not received criticisms after these classes. As a result, she considers it to be a waste of time and ineffective.

Visits by the supervisor are not frequent enough

Four student teachers reported that their supervising teachers have not visited the school even once during the first month of internship. This can be considered to be very serious negligence from the part of the supervising teachers as the beginning phase is the time when most of the student teachers faced many difficulties in coping up. Timely visits, guidance, and support would have helped the student teachers adjust and perform better. *All the student teachers whose supervising teachers visited the school and observed their classes reported to get more confident and relaxed after the visit*. The feedbacks and criticisms from the supervising teacher were received positively by the student teachers. Friendly and cordial relationship with the supervising teacher seemed to improve the performance of the student teachers also. One male student teacher said –

“.... He is not that strict. He asks to focus on teaching. If we fail to perform well in the class, he would criticize. He wants to make sure that the students should learn. He allows us to modify lessons while we take classes as per the situation demands. The mentor teacher asked me to mix both English and Malayalam to teach English medium class as they could not follow properly. But, the supervisor wanted me to use English so that the students gradually learn to communicate in English.”

The importance given by the supervising teacher for effective teaching-learning rather than on completing lesson plans staying inside the rigid frameworks gives a positive message to the student teachers. But, criticisms and the way in which criticism takes place also are very important. A female student teacher informed that she felt very bad after the supervising teacher came to observe her class and left the classroom in between. She said she felt very upset when the supervising teacher left the class.

"....When the supervising teacher came for observation, she left my class before it was finished. And she told me that class management was not good enough and how I was able to take the class. She told me to use some tricks to keep the students interested. I discussed with

my fellow trainees and they also did not have any idea. I didn't know how to. I did not have any experience. Such a large class was very difficult.

Leaving the classroom when the student teacher was already facing difficulty added to her misery and she said she could not complete the lesson which was already a mess. So, the way in which supervising teacher behaves with the student teachers is very important, especially during the first days of school internship.

Mentor teachers are helpful, cooperative and friendly

All the student teachers informed that they had a friendly and cordial relationship with the mentor teachers. *All the mentor teachers, other than two were reported to visit the class when the student teachers were taking classes.* Only two mentor teachers had not visited the class of the student teacher until then. As the mentor teachers were very much aware of all the aspects of the students whom the student teachers teach, their support and guidance were very useful. *But, the biggest challenge the student teachers had to face was the pressure from the mentor teachers to complete the portions required for the upcoming term end examinations.* The lack of interest shown by the mentor teacher to visit the class and give feedback to the student teachers had a negative impact on them. One student teacher whose mentor teacher never visited the class reported-

“ He asked me just to take classes based on the textbook. Never visited the class. Nor received any feedbacks. Maybe because the class given to me is tagged as a class with hopeless students. Here they show a kind of partiality. It is not desirable. I felt sad thinking about this.”

Some mentor teachers were reported to have very good relationships with the student teachers that they even shared some materials and resources that they received from some social media groups exclusively meant for teachers. These student teachers could perform well due to this kind of support from the part of the mentor teachers.

We feel that we are teachers and we are considered as teachers also.

The student teachers reported that they felt like teachers when they were in the school for internship and the regular teachers addressed them as teachers. They said that they *did not have any role conflicts or confusions. The student teachers were accepted as a part of the larger teacher community except during some rare occasions and by some rare teachers.* Student teachers were allowed to attend PTA meetings and other such activities where a regular teacher gets involved. The student teachers said that they *feel like a student only when the supervising teacher comes to visits the school for observation and when they need to take some decisions related to the students they teach.* One female student teacher said –

"....Sometimes I get confused when I have to make some decisions here. Then I need to consult the mentor teacher. I have it in my mind that I need to go back to college as a student after this. But, it does not affect my work. I think some teachers have the feeling that we are only trainee teachers. Even a slight change in the dress code will be noted and reported. But, in fact, some teachers also will be wearing the same kind of clothes. But they don't have any complaints. But all together they are satisfied with us. We help them in all activities. They

said so in a meeting of trainees and teachers."

Some regular teachers consider student teachers as only students and behave in such a manner. But, altogether the recognition received by the student teachers in the larger teaching community was reported to be satisfactory.

ICT facilities are not adequate and available

All the student teachers complained of *insufficient ICT facilities or inadequate access/availability of the same in the schools*. Majority of the student teachers took laptops to the classrooms to show the students videos and images related to the lessons. But, it had its own drawbacks and could not substitute a smart classroom. The experience of using laptops in the classroom are described by two student teachers –

"...I show them a video to introduce all the lessons. In other nearby schools where our fellow trainees do the internship, they have ICT and whiteboard in the classes. But, here we have to take our laptops to the class in order to show them videos or such materials. I elevate the laptop on the table and show the video to the students. I take laptops regularly in the class. It would have been effective if there was a projector in the classrooms."

"...Using a laptop in the classroom is a time-consuming process as I have to take the laptop to all the benches and show each and every student."

The student teachers are strictly advised by the supervising teacher to use ICT facilities more to supplement the learning. *But, the real situations of the schools do not allow them to use it effectively on a regular basis*. They try to compensate for the lack of ICT facilities at the school by taking their own laptops to the classrooms. But, they report it to be time-consuming and difficult. Even if the schools are reported to have smart classrooms, its availability and access for student teachers were found to be very limited.

Daily life is not affected, but only the things I do now are different

Except for one student teacher, all those who were interviewed responded that school internship did not have a serious impact on their daily routines. Even if slight changes were reported, they said that those were not because of the internship. Those who had to make some changes in their daily routines attributed it to factors other than school internship. Getting married just before internship and moving to husband's house and starting to take tuition classes as the along with school internship was reported to be the reasons for this. Other than these, student teachers did not have to make any notable changes in their daily routines. But, they had reported that the way they had learned changed because of the internship. The one who had to make big changes in her daily routine considers it to be a positive change and reported –

"...Yes. Big changes were there. I used to wake up at 7'o clock. My mother used to try really hard to wake me up. Now, I wake up by the 5'o clock to prepare for the class. And I need time to get dressed in the sari. Routine is changed for the better. I never thought I would wake up at 5'o clock."

Learning to teach has made serious changes in the learning patterns of student teachers.

They informed that as they don't want to feel bad and incompetent before the students they teach, they spend a lot of time for preparation. A female student teacher responded

“.... But, there is a student who asks seemingly silly, but difficult to answer questions. I used to be afraid of him. Now I am OK, as I think about all the possible questions related to my lessons prepare for classes accordingly.”

The experiences they had with the students during the first days made the student teachers prepare for classes more carefully and rigorously.

Reflections

The analysis of the interview data from the ten student teachers exposed ten major themes related to different areas. These themes reveal the sum total of lived experiences of these student teachers during their school internship. *The difficulties faced during the first days, the revelation that the roles and responsibilities assigned to regular teachers are not given to student teachers, the inability to practice the recommended teaching methods and strategies in the classrooms, understanding the importance of demonstration and criticism classes based on real-life classroom experiences, the kind of support from the supervising teacher as well as from the mentor teacher, recognition in the larger teaching community, availability of technology and the effect of practice teaching on the daily lives* were the main themes emerged. The essence of the internship experience for the student teacher can thus be explained as an organic whole which involves several living and non-living elements. The experience is determined and modified by several factors. Students, teachers, school infrastructure, preparation from the teacher education college/institute, the student teacher's ability to modify, adjust, improve and cope up with the actual situations in the school and classrooms all play a role in the experience. The essence of the experience, even if cannot be extrapolated or generalized to a larger population, reveals a great deal about the way in which the student teachers of different teacher education colleges/institutes give meaning to the school internship experience.

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