

Challenges of Practicum at College of Education: Supervisors & Students' Teachers Perspective

Dr. Fayhaa Al-Momani

College of Education, Najran University, Najran, KSA

Abstract: This study aimed at investigating practicum challenges at faculty of education from supervisors and students' teachers' perspective. To achieve this objective tow questionnaire was developed according to likert scale, the first for students' teachers contain five axes applied to a sample of (71) students attending practicum in various academic majors for the 2014/ 2015 who were randomly chosen, and the other, for supervisors contains four axes applied to eighteen, they all educational supervisors at Najran University. Results showed the important issues that cause challenges of practicum for students' teachers perspective is: Teaching in a secondary school; large numbers of students per classroom, unavailability of advanced educational technologies; large numbers of practicum students from the same major at the cooperating school; supervision and administrative work load. But the challenges of practicum for supervisors perspective are: use of external sources of information; educational aids usage; Mistreatment of the school management; Sense of isolation; Limited understanding of the subject matter; the difficulty of curriculum; inadequacy of training period; the possibilities of school; cooperation between the student and the school; personal student aren't leadership; participation in extracurricular activities; Fear of teaching; communication skills; linkage between theory and practice, and practical application in the laboratory . The study also suggested some recommendation including the need for continuous development of practicum program, holding workshops for students during training as well as coordinating with different interested parties.

Keywords: challenges, educational supervisor, faculty of education, Najran University, practicum, students' teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an important tool for the achievement of progress in a changing world, and a major element in national development process (UNESCO, 2005). However effective education has certain prerequisites of which the teacher is the most important, for the educational process cannot realize its objectives without a teacher with scientific and professional preparation and a high level of competency that enables him to perform the roles imposed on him as an educator, guide and leader.

Teaching professions occupies the fourth position among demanding profession requiring abilities, information and training, according to Flanagan classification of professions (Abdehadi& Al-Ezzeh, 2012). Therefore it is important to take care of teachers preparation and development programs, specially pre-service teacher education program (PTEP), the most salient of which is the practicum (Maphosa, shumba & sieborger, 2005); as it is the first opportunity for preparing teacher for teaching status and providing them with clear understanding of educational contexts by providing students with real opportunity to employ knowledge, information, and theories acquired through their study journey (National Institute of Education, 2013; Kennedy, 2006).It is also a real practice of teaching process through which students are

allowed to investigate current work environment conditions, and explore internal and external factors affecting organizational structure characteristics, school planning activities effects on and assessment (Ground water & Smith, 1996).

Practicum is the focus of all world country interest for its influence on the development of skills, and behaviors of students teachers, where several studies demonstrated its major role in bridging the gap between theory and practice, provides a framework for the acquisition and development of students educational and personal competencies (Smith and levari, 2005: 291). It also provides them with and develops their knowledge in teaching and profession including, people knowledge, self-knowledge and self-control (Eraut, 1988, cited in yan & He, 2010); and teach students teachers life skills as independence in problem solving, group work with colleagues teachers and employees, developing attitudes towards profession students and career values (Ramsden, 1992), in addition to that practicum assist students in understanding social, cultural, political and economic factors on which education is based, and it allows students to discover their capabilities and creativities which help them in teaching in the future (Tuli & File, 2009).

Unfortunately, despite being a vital element in teacher education, practicum is still a subject of arguing among scholars and educators and it occupies a large space in educational literature (schults, 2005), due to problems and challenges and obstacles facing students, during application despite their benefits in developing several teaching skill (Hamaidi, Al-shara, Abu Awwad, 2014). Vick (2006) pointed out that new attitudes should focus on students' teachers training related problems.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Farrell (2008) study showed that among the most important factors affecting students' teachers' practicum experience in the cooperation of teacher and peers who spend most of their time with students' teachers.

Furthermore, org, ros, Azlian and Shamti (2004) study reported that students' teachers are in high level of pressure during their practicum training which hindering positive participation in educational process as well as other several issues that cause impairment in practicum as tension, supervision and administrative work load.

Manzer – Abbas & Iv (2013) analysis of preservice teacher education program, at (10) Chinese university, showed three common issues hindering the program: practicum is a very short time period, inappropriate time to transfer students teachers to the field, and out dated methods of carrying out practicum training.

Josoh (2011) study at Malaysia demonstrated that students faced several challenges some of which are personal and related to students themselves, others are related to education mean.

while shaheen (2010) study which reported problem during field training related to academic supervisor, cooperative school, cooperative school students and the faced mathematics and Arabic language majoring students as compared to other majors.

3. PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

Today, with the technological changes and developments and educational renaissance in the world, is facing significant challenges schools. Because of this, it was recognized that continuing professional education must find ways and means to teacher preparation to cope with the complexities of the classroom and the workplace. Therefore, the States pays due attention to teacher training programs, including Saudi Arabia, which is seeking to expand education at all levels to change society. National Report of the International Commission on Education in 21st century has stressed the need for constant and continuous training of teachers has been confirmed (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Since we know that teacher colleges are the umbrella that prepare pre service teacher in various majors, this study come to throw light on the most important stage in pre service teachers preparation in education colleges which is the practicum training Therefore this study came to find out challenges facing practicum students of Najran University from supervisors and students teachers perspectives, to help students firstly and concerned parties to understand students' needs to improve practicum concept and raising program level, as well as presenting suggestions and recommendation for the development

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of practicum program, so the study main question is "what are the challenges facing practicum program at faculty of education?" Specifically the study attempted answering the following research questions:

- What are the challenges facing the practicum program from supervisors perspectives?
- What are the challenges facing the practicum program from students' teachers perspectives?

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Search takes its importance from the nature of the subject covered about obstacles of practicum, and the category that suffers from the existence of these obstacles, a student's teacher. A student teacher is concerned with education process; then the point of view is crucial to the program of practicum. And perhaps, the results provide concrete evidence for those involved in this program in the faculties of education for appropriate solutions for students, and the development of the program appropriately to limit and reduce the suffering of the students. Also, may help educators responsible for teacher preparation programs before serving.

due to researcher experience in the field of practicum, as an educational supervisor, she felt the existence of difficulties and challenges facing practicum students (students' teachers) during the practical application at schools, where multiplicity of and interfering roles of members participating in practicum, and the multiple events to which students teachers are exposed to in and out the classroom, and which might be a result of different reasons, it is necessary that we take care and attend to this program, and as the student teacher is concerned with practicum, and the supervisor is the direct observed the skills of the students' teachers, then the both perspective is critical and determinant of practicum program.

5. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- Conduct study on female teachers without students, because most of the disciplines stopped at a male in Najran University.
- The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2014/ 2015.

6. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Population and Sample:

Research population consisted of all eighth level students at Education College attending practicum training during the spring semester for the academic year 2014 /2015. Totaling for (180) female students. As for the study sample it comprises 30% of its population totaling for (71) randomly chosen from various academic majors. In addition to all educational supervisors in the faculty of education totaling for (18)

Methodology and instruments:

Descriptive analytical approach, based of studying the phenomenon as it is for a large sample of the population, was employed in this study.

Data was collected using tow questionnaire developed according to likert five point scale, the first for students' teachers including five themes: practicum program procedures, educational supervisory cooperating teacher, school principal, and cooperating school. And the other for educational supervisors including four themes: academic preparation, personality, social relationship, and the possibilities of training these themes were chosen after reviewing educational literature and exploring practicum program student's opinions.

Content validity was established by submitting the instrument to a group of experts and educators, referees, is science and mathematics and to experts in Measurement and evaluation, and based on their opinions' and comments some items were removed, and others were modified. As for the instrument reliability internal consistency coefficient was computed on an exploratory sample not participating in the study, where Cronbach alpha was (0.88) which is suitable for this study.

Statistical Analysis:

Data were analyzed statistically by using computerized program called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Mains, standard deviations, and T-test were calculated to detect challenges, and arrange them in order of importance and indicate its relationship with some demographic variables.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results related to the first research question:

What are the challenges facing the practicum program from supervisors perspectives? Means and standard deviations of practicum challenges as seen by educational supervisors were used in answering this questions and table: I displayed these results.

Table.I: Means and standard deviations of practicum challenges from educational supervisors' perspective in a descending order

Domain	Rank	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social relationship	1	2.21	.231
Personality	2	2.15	.283
The possibilities of training	3	2.12	.164
Academic preparation	4	1.91	.202
Total Score		2.07	.148

Table: I showed that social relationship was ranked first with the highest mean (2.21) and SD (0.231), while academic preparation was ranked lastly with mean of (1.91) and SD (0.202), so means and standard deviation of sample responses on the items of each domain were computed, and these means and standard deviations are displayed in table: II

Table.II: Means and standard deviations of items receiving lowest rating in each domain in a descending order

Domain	Statement	Mean	SD	Degree
Social relationship	Students suffer from poor school management deal.	1.53	.640	Medium
	Students suffer from a sense of isolation and lack of belonging to the school.	1.40	.507	Weak
Personality	The student awestruck and confused when faced with students in the classroom.	1.93	.704	Medium
	The students excitedly participate in school activities.	1.87	.743	Medium
	The student has a personal leadership qualify him to practice.	1.80	.561	Medium
The possibilities of training	Training School is cooperating with the student in regard to his work: the preparation of worksheets, tests, and the production of teaching aids.	1.80	.561	Medium
	Training period in schools is not enough.	1.60	.828	Medium
	Training School offers technical innovations: computers, projectors, data show, smart blackboard and internet.	1.60	.507	Medium
	The difficulty of curriculum and lack of relevance to the student's abilities.	1.60	.507	Medium
Academic preparation	The student has the necessary capacities for the practical application of various scientific theories in the area of specialization	1.93	.458	Medium
	The weakness of the student's ability to link scientific material to the environment, life and its applications	1.93	.799	Medium
	The student has the necessary contact and communication skills (listening / speaking / reading / writing)	1.93	.704	Medium
	Lack of cultural awareness to the student and comprehensive understanding of the scientific article	1.80	.862	Medium
	The student knows the latest developments and innovations in the field of specialization	1.67	.488	Medium
	The student has a deep and broad understanding of the substance of specialization (facts /concepts /principles / theories)	1.60	.507	Medium
	The student has the positive trends towards choosing the right educational aids effectively	1.53	.640	Weak
	Diversifies the student in the sources of information used by the book is not limited to information	1.40	.507	Weak

Table: II showed that item occupying the last rank and lowest means which represent a challenge facing practicum students were: the weakness use of external sources of information; the weakness use of effective educational aids; Mistreatment of the school management; Sense of isolation and lack of belonging to the school; Limited understanding of the subject matter and lack of cultural awareness to understanding it; lack of access to the latest developments and innovations in the field of specialization; the difficulty of curriculum; inadequacy of training period; the weakness of the possibilities of school; weak cooperation between the student and the school; personal student aren't leadership; weak participation in extracurricular activities; Fear of teaching; lack of communication skills; The weakness of linkage between theory and practice, and the weakness of practical application in the laboratory.

We showed that supervisors primarily dissatisfied with academic preparation for students, this may be due to the specialized university courses are not related to the content that the student is studying in school, And focus the university teaching on the theoretical side with neglecting the application and practice in the laboratory. Supervisors also pointed to difficulties in training possibilities was returning to unconvincing school principals in the role of a student teacher in the school and in the classroom, which will reflect negatively on the construction of social relations inside the school with various categories, also the choice of application schools not subject to standards reveal their effectiveness as an environment suitable for educational training to meet the students' needs. Supervisors also revealed the challenges in students personality related to high level of pressure during the practical training which impedes the positive participation in the educational process, in addition to weak development of skills such as scientific thinking and experimentation, and neglecting micro-teaching, which allows the student to represent educational situation and hands-on teaching strategies. This is consistent with study of Farrell (2008), org et al (2004), Josoh (2011), and Manzer – Abbas & Lu, (2013).

Results related to the second research question:

What are the challenges facing the practicum program from students' teachers perspectives? Means and standard deviations of practicum challenges as seen by students' teacher, were used in answering this questions and table: III displayed these results.

Table.III: Means and standard deviations of practicum challenges from students' teachers' perspective in a descending order

Domain	Rank	Mean	Standard Deviation
Practicum program procedures	1	2.67	0.358
Educational supervisor	2	2.60	0.265
Cooperating teacher	3	2.31	0.466
School principal	4	2.28	0.420
Cooperating school	5	2.11	0.319
Total Score		2.44	0.244

Table: III showed that practicum program procedures was ranked first with the highest mean (2.67) and SD (0.358), while cooperating school was ranked lastly with mean of (2.11) and SD (0.319), so means and standard deviation of sample responses on the items of each domain were computed, and these means and standard deviations are displayed in table: IV

Table.IV: Means and standard deviations of items receiving lowest rating in each domain in a descending order

Domain	Statement	Mean	SD	Degree
Program preparing procedures	The program provides electronic communication skills	2.46	0.651	medium
Educational Supervisor	Supervisors interferes during the lesson	2.32	0.841	medium
	Supervisor is influenced by opinion of those around him in his evaluation.	2.21	0.754	medium
Cooperating teacher	Cooperating teacher interferes in the lesson directly.	2.15	0.839	medium
	Cooperating teachers exploit the existence of trainee student in all what's he ought to do	2.15	0.822	medium
	Shows disinterest in student teachers and their capabilities.	2.08	0.770	medium
School principal	Rarely follow up of students' teacher in the classroom.	2.14	0.743	medium
	Gives him over load work.	2.10	0.881	medium
Cooperating	Large numbers of practicum students in the school disperse	2.10	0.700	medium

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school	cooperating teacher's efforts.			
	Provides advanced educational technologies.	2.07	0.816	medium
	Large numbers of per classroom hinders order maintenance.	1.86	0.743	low
	Practicum teacher prefers teaching in the middle stage over secondary stage.	1.73	0.844	low

Table: IV showed that item occupying the last rank and lowest means which represent a challenge facing practicum students were: Teaching in a secondary school; large numbers of students per classroom, unavailability of advanced educational technologies, and large numbers of practicum students from the same major at the cooperating school, principal charging student teacher with over loaded work. Rarity of following up student teacher inside the classroom, distrust in student teacher by cooperating teacher, and exploiting her for exciting all her school deities and interfering directly in the lesson course, educational supervisors is influence, in his evaluation, by opinions of those around his and his interference in the lesson course, and poor electronic communication skills with those in charge of the program.

It can be noticed that challenges suffered by student teachers are all related to the field (cooperating school, school principal, and cooperating teachers) and this might be due to the non-considering of application school during students distribution, and the principal not convinced in the role performed by student teacher in the school, and her fear of parents complaints regarding student teacher when making a mistake, and overload of burdens on the school principal to the degree that she has no time for supervising and earring of student teacher, in addition to cooperating teacher lack of knowledge regarding her role towards student teacher and of the importance of training stage for her, while university related themes (domains) [cooperating supervisor program preparation procedures] received high ratings which are indications on the existence of strength elements in aspects related to these domains and elements in aspects related to these domains and on its effectiveness in many aspects, and this might be due to the clarity of program preparation procedures and the existence of a training plan, and the training process passing through sequential and successive stages as well as administrative communication and control procedures with students to find out the important problem facing by students as well as solving difficulties as much as possible; as well as supervisor sense of responsibility and his commitment to his role and his provision of appropriate feedback that improves teaching skills continuously, and this is consistent with Farrell (2008), org et al (2004) and Josoh (2011) study. But is inconsistent with Manzer – Abbas & Lu,(2013) and Shaheen (2010) studies in terms of challenges order according to their importance.

8. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate practicum challenges at faculty of education from supervisors and students' teachers' perspective. The following conclusions were reached:

- The most serious challenges in practicum according to their importance, as seen by student teachers were as follows: Cooperating school, school principal and cooperating teacher, while challenges less serious were: educational supervisor and program preparation procedures.
- The most serious challenges in practicum according to their importance, as seen by supervisors were as follows: Academic preparation, the possibilities of training, while challenges less serious were: personality, and social relationship.
- Important issues that cause impairment in practicum is (supervisors perspective): the weakness use of external sources of information; the weakness use of effective educational aids; Mistreatment of the school management; Sense of isolation and lack of belonging to the school; Limited understanding of the subject matter and lack of cultural awareness to understanding it; lack of access to the latest developments and innovations in the field of specialization; the difficulty of curriculum; inadequacy of training period; the weakness of the possibilities of school; weak cooperation between the student and the school; personal student aren't leadership; weak participation in extracurricular activities; Fear of teaching; lack of communication skills; The weakness of linkage between theory and practice, and the weakness of practical application in the laboratory.
- Important issues that cause impairment in practicum is (students' teachers perspective): Teaching in a secondary school; large numbers of students per classroom, unavailability of advanced educational technologies; large numbers of practicum students from the same major at the cooperating school; supervision and administrative work load; rarity of following up student teacher inside the classroom; distrust in student teacher by cooperating teacher; exploiting her for exciting all her

school deities and interfering directly in the lesson course; educational supervisors is influence, in his evaluation, by opinions of those around his and his interference in the lesson course, and poor electronic communication skills with those in charge of the program.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the previous results, researcher advises those in charge of practicum program at Najran University the following:

- The importance of continuous development of practicum program objectives according to the age developments advances and variables.
- Holding training workshop for students teachers during field training, that enhance their abilities in good planning and practicing modern teaching method.
- The provision of guides specific to practicum with unified visions for each of educational supervisors, student, school principal and cooperating teacher.
- Set specific critical for application schools that make space for the accurate and effective implementation of the training process, coordination with various parties participating and involved in practicum training process such as supervisors, directorates of education, cooperating teachers and school principals at cooperating schools before starting the practicum program to have consistency between educational ideas and practical application of students, teachers.
- Conducting similar studies with other larger and more representative sample and the study of these challenges from other people such as school principal and cooperating teachers' perspective in order to be more comprehensive.

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