

Practice Teaching in Pre-service Teacher Training Programme at Elementary Level in Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Practice teaching implemented at the time of pre-service teacher training programme play an instrumental role in preparing efficient, persuaded & skillful teaching professional who can strengthen as well prop-up the quality of elementary school education. Practice teaching being the practical aspect of the training programme is the heart and soul of the training programme. The present paper highlighted how the practice teaching is being carried out during the transaction of curriculum of pre-service teacher training programme at elementary level in Himachal Pradesh. It highlights the types of schools allotted for practice teaching; span/ duration of practice teaching; lesson plans practiced; observations carried out by the prospective teachers; mode of assessment of performance of prospective teachers during practice teaching. This investigation was carried out in 14 teacher education colleges and 4 DIETs selected randomly. The data collected were analyzed & interpreted by using frequency and percentages under descriptive statistics only. The findings revealed that, only government primary schools were allotted to conduct practice teaching. The span/ duration of practice teaching was ranging from 12 weeks to more than 18 weeks. The prospective teachers showed large variations in practicing the lessons ranging from 30-50 macro lesson per teaching subject. The number of lessons observed also showed variations ranging from 10-30 observations per teaching subject. Internal mode of examination was adopted to assess and evaluate the performance of prospective teacher. Based upon the findings, suggestions have been made for the improvement of practice teaching in the pre-service training programme at elementary level.

Keywords: Practice Teaching, Macro Lessons, Classroom Observation, Assessment of Performance, Pre-service Teacher Training Programme at Elementary Level.

Introduction

The extremity of an elementary education program has been realized by just about by all of the educational institutions of the contemporary epoch. Elementary education aids a learner to concede her/his instantaneous ambience. During this phase of education, a learner's intellect starts making herself/himself aware about the abstract phenomenon just like numerals as well as words. A learner cannot perceive numerical figures until she/he cannot behold the concrete depiction of those abstract upshot. Hence, a panoramic elementary education curriculum can make a learner grasp and understand these composite entities easily when carried out by a productive teacher. So, teachers are the important masonry foundations in our educational system. Considering it as a scaffold elementary education is its first step and no institution can run without proficient elementary education teachers. These are many elementary teachers who became learner's first philosopher, friend, educator, facilitator, and guide.

Learners acquire each and every basic of education and life from their elementary school teachers. These teachers play a crucial role in learner's physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual development. Learners are motivated by teachers to become a more desirable genre of themselves. It is the only elementary teacher who encourage her/his students to open up and expand their circle; take care their physical health and well-being by organizing enormous games and sports events and, other physical activities; cater to needs of each and every learner; pay individualized attention to the learner; understand their issues and concerns and simultaneously provide with suitable solutions too. It is the only teacher who can instill insights and make learners life disciplined by helping them understanding the significance of time and its appropriate management for better possibilities in the future keeping their interests lively. Therefore, providing a high-quality elementary teacher education for developing competent elementary school teachers is the need of hour who can support the students during elementary education years to grow into robust, distinctive, assertive, optimistic and learned individuals. Darling-Hammond, Chung & Frelow (2002) in their research indicated that teachers prepared in teacher education programs feel significantly better prepared for most of the teaching dimensions than those did not undergo teacher education programmes. However, the pre-service teacher training programmes at elementary level substantiated stern in this direction, the foregoing programmes aimed at imparting gleaming knowledge, skills and complimentary attitudes in the prospective teachers to meet the existing trends, predicament and contemplation. There is a high degree of consensus as to the importance of teaching practice in teacher preparation, controversies and disputes exist over the amount (how much practice is necessary for teacher preparation), kind (what kind of practice is appropriate for teacher preparation) and timing (when should teaching practice be arranged) of teaching practice (Rao and Wu 2021). In Himachal Pradesh, Pre-service teacher training program at elementary level is offered as D.El.Ed. i.e. Diploma in Elementary Teacher Education. At present the forenamed course is being offered by 28 self-financed teacher education institutions and 12 District Institutes of Education and Training, affiliated to Himachal Pradesh Board of Education Dharamshala. The curriculum followed in these teacher preparation programmes for elementary level of school education is developed by State Council of Educational Research and Training, Solan.

Significance of Study

National Education Policy (2020) emphasizes that teacher education is indispensable in shaping a pool of school teachers that will shape the coming cohort. Teacher preparation is an activity that requires multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, formation of temperament, ethics, and development of practice under the best mentors. The policy also emphasizes on innovative pedagogies, teaching methods/ strategies and to build comparatively spirited teaching professionals for better networking. The teacher education programme at elementary level is supposed to equip the prospective elementary school teachers with appropriate knowledge, understanding, skills, attitude and innovative pedagogies that are essential to be attained by a competent and proficient elementary teacher in real world scenario. The facet of elementary school reckons consummate, capable & self-assured teaching professional. This is only viable if ongoing practices teaching is implemented efficaciously in the practice teaching schools. Syzdykbayeva, Meterbayeva, Ageyeva, Agranovich, & Tyan (2025) in their literature review also highlighted that lesson modeling, collaborative analysis of practice etc. not only enhance teachers' competence but also directly influence their classroom work.

Operational Definitions

- **Pre-service Teacher Training Programme at Elementary Level**

The pre-service teacher training programme at elementary level refers to the formal training programme being imparted to the individuals before joining the formal schools as elementary teachers.

- **Practice Teaching**

The term practice teaching refers to the teaching which is conducted in the school to facilitate the prospective teachers for practicing the skills of teaching in real classroom situations that they have acquired during micro teaching and simulated teaching at institutional level.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the practice teaching during transaction of curriculum of pre-service teacher training programme at elementary level in Himachal Pradesh.

Methodology

Survey method under descriptive method of research was used to realize the stated objective.

Sample

The study was conducted using multistage sampling technique for Selection of Subjects of sample. At first 4 out of 12 districts were selected randomly. Further, out of 28 self-financed teacher education institutions and 12 District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), offering D.El.Ed. programme in Himachal Pradesh; 14 teacher education colleges and 4 DIETs were selected randomly to realize the stated objective. A sample of 517 elementary prospective teachers and 117 teacher educators was selected drawing upon incidental sampling. In addition to this 30 classroom observations were also carried out by the investigator to realize the objectives of the present investigation.

Technique and Tools

The present research availed self-developed tools viz. Questionnaire and observation schedule for gathering the required facts related to the study. These tools collected information related to nature of schools allotted for practice teaching, span/duration of practice teaching, observations made by every prospective teacher, lesson plans practiced, mode adopted to assess the performance of prospective teachers, time taken for evaluation of each prospective teacher to assess their skills in practice teaching during the transaction of curriculum of pre-service teacher training programme.

Data Analysis

The information gathered through questionnaire and observation schedules was tabulated and organized under different categories followed by qualitative data analysis. The tabulated data was further analyzed in terms of frequencies and percentages.

Findings

- **Type of Schools**

All the prospective teachers and teacher educators responded that practice teaching was carried out in government schools only.

- **Duration**

The responses of teacher educators and prospective teachers about duration of practice teaching in the allotted government schools are presented in the figure-1 below.

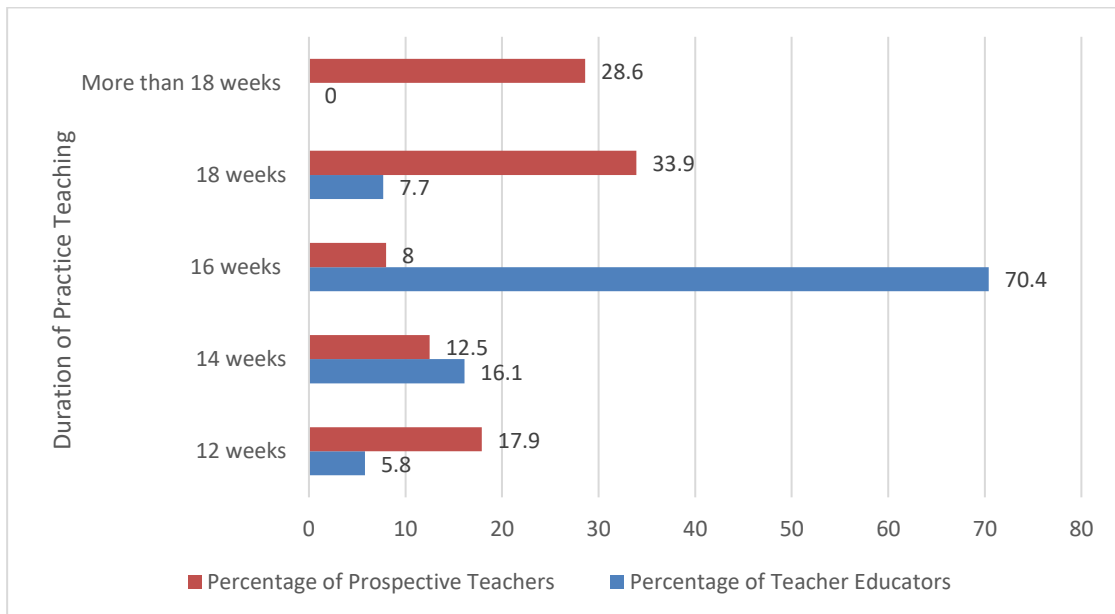


Figure 1: Responses of Prospective Teachers (N=517) & Teacher Educators (N=112) about the duration of practice teaching in the allotted schools

Figure-1 clearly indicates variations in the responses of teacher educators & prospective teachers on the duration of practice teaching viz. number of weeks provided for practice teaching in the allotted government school. Further it may interpret that most (28.9 -33.9 percent) of the teacher educators expressed that 18 weeks, more than above (18 weeks), small number (8.0 -17.9 percent) of them asserted that 12 weeks, 14 weeks, 16 weeks are provided for practice teaching in the allotted school in pre service teacher training program. While in contrast a greater number (70.4 percent) of the prospective teachers expressed 16 weeks, rare of them (5.8 -16.1 percent) expressed 14 weeks, 18 weeks, 12 weeks are provided for practice teaching in the allotted school in pre service teacher training program at elementary level.

Number of Lessons Practiced

The responses of teacher educators and prospective teachers about the number of lessons practiced during practice teaching in the allotted govt schools are presented in the figure-2 below.

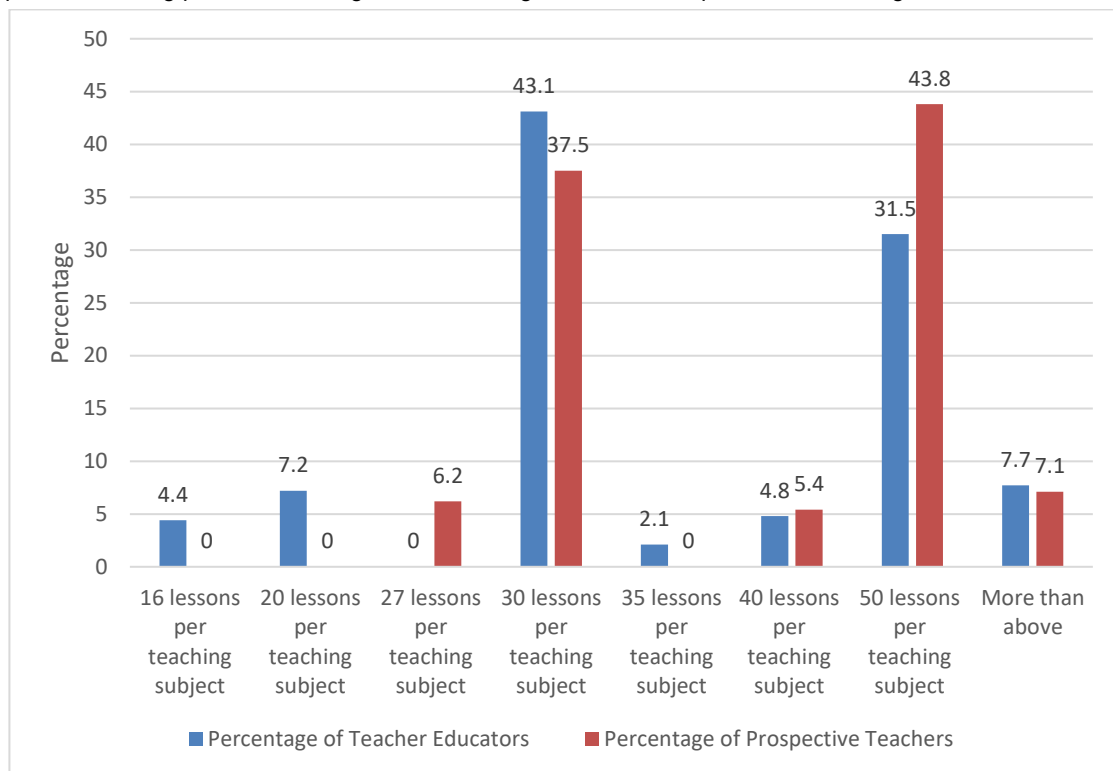


Figure-2 Responses of Prospective Teachers (N=517) & Teacher Educators (N=112) about the no. of lessons practiced during practice teaching in the allotted schools

Figure-2 indicates that little more than one third of the prospective teachers (37.50 percent) and less than half of the teacher educators (43.10 percent) responded for practicing 30 lessons per teaching subject. Similarly, less than half of the prospective teachers (43.80 percent) and less than one third of the teacher educators (31.50 percent) for practicing 50 lessons per teaching subject. A few among both of the prospective teachers and teacher educators also responded for practicing a different number of lessons other than 30 or 50 lessons during practice teaching. Foregoing analysis indicates huge variation in terms of number of lessons practiced by the prospective teachers in elementary teachers pre-service training programme in Himachal Pradesh. It is pertinent to mention here that the programme in all these institutions is affiliated to Himachal Pradesh Board of School Education, Dharamshala and the syllabus followed is developed by SCERT Himachal Pradesh.

Number of Lessons Observed

The responses of teacher educators and prospective teachers about the number lessons observed during practice teaching in the allotted govt schools are presented in the figure-3 below.

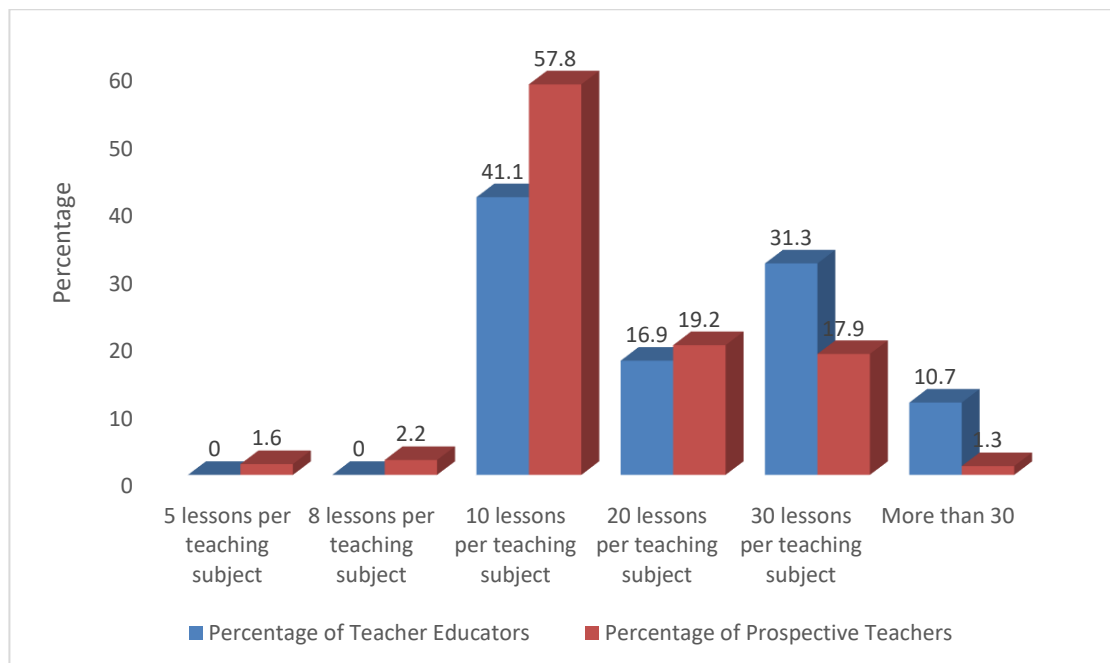


Figure 3: Responses of Prospective Teachers (N=517) & Teacher Educators (N=112) about the no. of lessons observed during practice teaching in the allotted schools

It can be seen from figure-3 that majority of prospective teachers (more than half 57.80 percent) responded that 10 lesson per teaching subject were observed by each of them and some of them (19.20 percent) responded for observing 20 lessons per teaching subject and few of them (7.90 percent) responded for observing 30 lessons per teaching subject. This trend was also echoed by teacher educators with less than half of them i.e. 41.40 percent for observing 10 lessons, 16.90 percent for observing 20 lessons and 31.30 percent for observing 30 lessons per teaching subject during practice teaching. Very few among both of the prospective teachers and teacher educators also responded for observing less than 10 lessons and more than 30 lessons per teaching subjects. This also indicates variations in the number of lessons observed during practice teaching in pre-service training programme.

Planning, Class management, Confidence and Time Management

To study the actual practice of teaching in real classrooms the investigator observed 30 lessons/classes delivered by prospective teachers in practicing schools. During these observations about the Planning, Class management, Confidence and Time Management by prospective teachers during practice teaching it was found that most of the prospective teachers (more than 80.00 percent) were found to have lesson plans in their lesson plans notebooks. Out of these, the lesson plan notebooks of about a little more than two third (68 percent) of the prospective teachers were checked and correctives had been provided, and about one third of the prospective teachers were teaching their lessons without the correctives by the supervisor. It was also observed that most of the lesson planned were not in continuity and most of the topics chosen were selected randomly, which was also reported by a little less than two third of the prospective teachers (61.30 percent). A little more than one fourth of the prospective teachers also responded for choosing those topics for teaching which were asked by the concerned class teacher.

Class management and time management of large majority of the prospective teachers (more than 80.00 percent) was felicitous and majority of prospective teachers (73.00 percent) were teaching confidently in the class.

Classroom Interactions during Teaching-Learning

During classroom observations it was observed that a large majority of prospective teachers (83.00 percents) made use of TLM, most of the prospective teachers (93.00 percent) had interaction with class and large majority of them (70.00 percent) were having adequate communication skills. It was

strange that most of them (67.00 percent) did not make use of the student's ideas while presenting their macro lesson plan during practice teaching. The teaching-learning process in large majority of prospective teachers' class (more than 70.00 percent) was neither activity nor ICT based. The teaching was teacher centric not learning centric where emphasis was more on delivery of content instead of understanding by the learner.

Lesson observations and feedback by supervisor

The responses of prospective teachers about the lessons observed and feedback given during practice teaching in the allotted govt schools are presented in the figure-4 below.

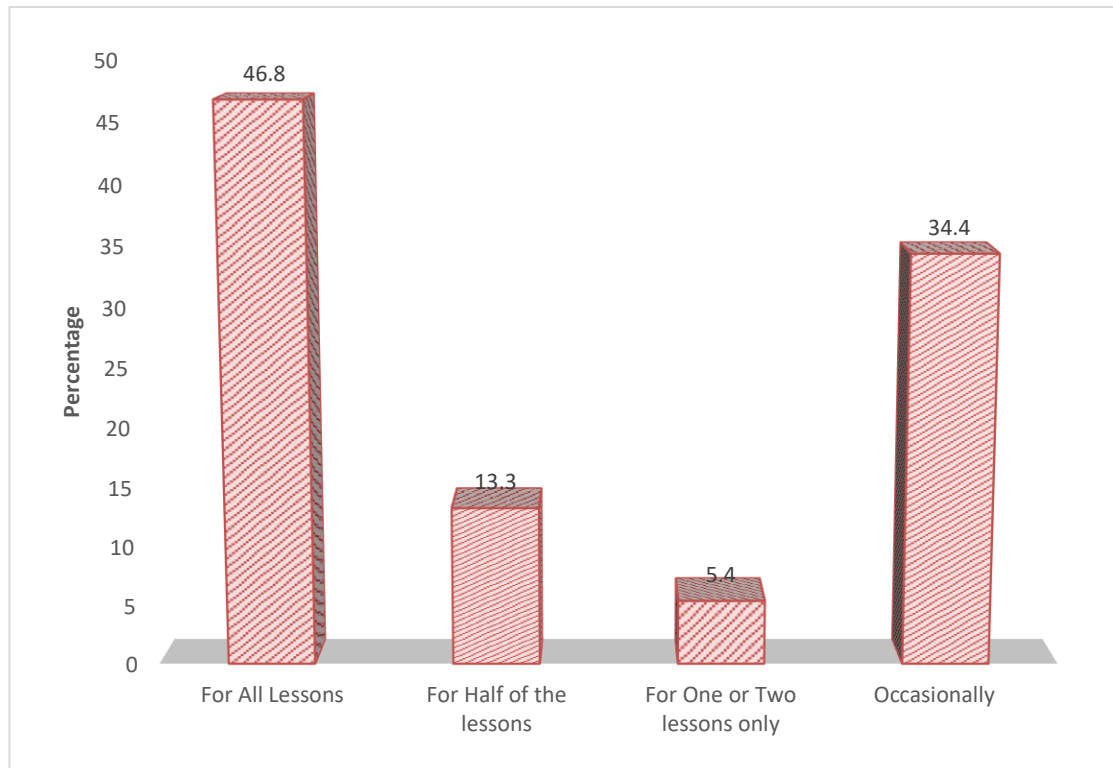


Figure 4: Responses of Prospective Teachers (N=517) about the lessons observed and feedback given during practice teaching in the allotted schools

It is evident from figure-4 that less than half of the prospective teachers (46.80 percent) reported that feedback was provided by supervisor for all lessons and less than one third of the prospective teachers (34.40 percent) responded that feedback was provided occasionally during practice teaching. Some of them (13.30 percent) responded for feedback from supervisor for half of the lessons and very few (5.40 percent) responded for feedback on one or two lessons that too rarely. However, majority of prospective teachers (60 percent) responded for getting feedback from peers.

Further, a large majority of prospective teachers (82.60 percent) found the feedback to be useful and less than one fifth of them found (16.40 percent) found the feedback useful to some extent.

Assessment of Performance in Skill in Teaching

In reference to mode adopted large majority of the prospective teachers (85.70 percent) asserted for internal mode of examinations while less than one fifth of them (14.30 percent) uttered that external mode of examinations was adopted to assess performance of the prospective teachers in skills in teaching examination. Which is in tune with the syllabus of pre-service teacher training at elementary level i.e. two-year D.El.Ed. programme in Himachal Pradesh. Wherein the sole practice of teaching depends upon the supervisor i.e. concerned teacher educator who has to mentor the prospective teachers for real world.

Role of teacher educators/ supervisors during practice teaching

The above mode of assessment of performance of prospective teachers indicates that the concerned teacher educator/ supervisor has the key role in pre-service teacher education programme at elementary level. It is the responsibility of the teacher educator/ supervisor in developing the prospective teachers as the 21st century competent teachers. Further, as there is no formal external examination to assess the skills acquired by the prospective teachers during practice teaching (also called as school internship), so the role of supervisor becomes very important. The total marks for skill in teaching to be assessed internally by the supervisor consists of 300 marks, which is quite large proportion of marks. This indicates for the possibilities of granting maximum marks to the prospective teachers during school internship, casually without undergoing rigorous grooming for teaching in real classroom scenario after certification in the pre service training programme and may lead to production of incompetent teachers. However, it might not be true always and there may be teacher educators who organize school internship rigorously and assess the prospective teachers objectively, which is the need of the hour in present day scenario.

Conclusion and Educational Implications

The above analysis of the responses of prospective teachers, teacher educators and observation of process of practice teaching revealed that, only government primary schools were allotted to conduct practice teaching. The span/ duration of Practice Teaching was ranging from 12 weeks to more than 18 weeks. The number of macro lessons practiced by prospective teachers showed large variations ranging from 30-50 macro lesson per teaching subject. Similarly, the number of lessons observed by them also showed variations ranging from 10-30 observations per teaching subject. Internal mode of examination was adopted to assess and evaluate the performance of prospective teacher. This puts questions on the quality of teacher education programme in terms of process of real teaching exposure i.e. experiencing the real classroom scenario by prospective teachers. There is no denying fact that quality of teacher education is questionable since past four to five decades as has already been pointed out by Justice Verma Commission report 2012 and recently by NEP 2020. Justice Verma Commission (2012) stated that most of the teacher education institutions are running on commercial bases, which lack quality pre-service training. This pathetic condition of teacher education is the main cause of degradation of quality in school education. This situation was also echoed 8 years later by National Education Policy (2020) as it states that teacher education institutions are of poor standard and are selling degrees to earn profit. Both of these documents suggested for overhaul of teacher education especially at pre-service teacher education level. The above analysis, findings and discussion leads to following implications and suggestions:

- Supervisor should observe and provide correctives to all the prospective teachers regularly, similarly feedback should be provided by observers as well as peers properly.
- All the prospective teachers should make use of TLM while presenting their macro lesson plans during practice teaching in the school.
- All the prospective teachers should make use activity-based learning for providing better learning experiences to the learners while presenting their macro lesson plans during practice teaching in the school.
- Emphasis should be given to make use of ICT by all the prospective teachers to supplement as well as effective presentation their macro lesson plans during practice teaching in the school.
- In addition to government schools, government aided as well as public and private schools should also be allotted to conduct practice teaching in all teacher training institutions. So that the prospective teachers should have exposure to a variety of schools by nature of their management.
- Duration to conduct practice teaching in the schools in pre- service teacher training program at elementary level varies thus there is a need to adopt a common span for aforementioned practice teaching in each teacher education institution affiliated to HPBOSE.
- Observations were made by prospective teachers during practice teaching but the numbers of observation per teaching subject varies from institution to institutions, therefore uniformity should be adopted in the number of observations made by prospective teachers of every teacher education Institute.

- Though equal opportunity is provided to every prospective teacher to practice macro lesson plans in the schools to make them competent and skilled teaching professionals yet there is a great need to decide an equal number of lesson plans per teaching subject for all prospective teachers enrolled in pre-service teacher training program at elementary level in Himachal Pradesh.
- All the prospective teachers must be provided with hundred percent supervision on regular or daily basis. As the practical process of practice teaching is the heart and soul of the teacher-preparation/ education programmes which remains incomplete without the presence of teacher educator/ supervisor.
- Undoubtedly skills in teaching assessments were conducted during the school internship/ practice teaching by the concerned supervisor. However, the assessment through external examiners should also be there to eliminate the compromise in the quality, if any, in the process of making 21st century teachers through the pre-service training programme. An appropriate time should be taken by the external examiners to assess the performance of the prospective teachers in skills in teaching in pre-service teacher training program at elementary level in Himachal Pradesh.

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