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Challenges Faced by Student Teachers During Teaching Practice

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Dedication

We want to express our gratitude to our parents for their unwavering support in pursuing academic goals and dedicate the research paper to them as a token of appreciation.

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We gladly show gratitude to everyone involved in the research project, highlighting the valuable support, guidance, and collaboration from supervisor and colleagues. Their contributions have been instrumental in achieving project goals and advancing understanding in the field.

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Section One

Introduction

This research paper discusses the challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice. Teaching practice is a fundamental pedagogical endeavor undertaken by all educational institutions in Kurdistan universities, as well as across the globe. "Teaching practice in the 21st century is considered to be one of the most influential aspects of pre-service teacher education" (Haigh, 2001, as cited in Koross, 2016).

The aim of the recent research is to show the difficulties that may a student teacher face throughout the teaching practice period. It is also beneficial to other researchers and the coming student teachers.

Teaching practice is a supervised learning environment that typically serves as the capstone course for undergraduate or graduate programs at universities or colleges that prepare students to become teachers. It establishes a connection between the academic courses you took at universities and your first experience as a teacher. "Practice teaching is one of the vital requirements for becoming a teacher. Through teaching practice, experiences are provide to student-teachers in the actual teaching and learning environment" (Annan-Brew& Arhin, 2022). It offers the student teachers the tip of what to expect and helps them with better preparation and application for real teaching.

The current research project is divided into four sections; Section one is an introduction that offers a general overview of the research project, namely, challenges faced by student teachers during teaching practice. Section two is the literature review, it contains the keywords of the research such as teaching practice, student teachers, necessity or importance of teaching practice, the challenges the student teacher may face during teaching practice as difficulties in lesson planning, classroom management, and student-teacher anxiety. Section three is devoted to experience and reflection with regard to challenges faced by student teachers while they experience along with their teaching practice. Finally, the present research ends with conclusions driven from the analysis and discussion, followed by a list of references.

<p style="text-align:center">Section Two</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Literature Review</p>

2.1 What are Teaching Practice and Student Teachers

Teaching practice is crucial for student teachers' professional development and preparation, allowing them to use their theoretical knowledge in real-world teaching situations. During teaching practice, student teachers begin by observing experienced educators before progressively taking on more responsibilities for class preparation and delivery, modifying teaching techniques, and evaluating students' progress. Ashton & Webb (2018) suggest that:

> A crucial component of teacher education programs around the world is teaching practice, commonly referred to as practicum or student teaching. By giving future educators, known as student teachers, first-hand experience in authentic classroom environments under the supervision of experienced mentor teachers, it acts as a link between theoretical learning and real-world application.

Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (2006) defines student teachers as individuals undergoing training to become teachers who actively participate in classroom instruction under the guidance of experienced educators. A study by Korthagen, Loughran, and Russell (2006) indicates that student teachers can acquire critical thinking, communication, and teamwork skills by actively participating in the learning process. As student teachers transition from observers to active participants in the classroom, they develop a deeper understanding of teaching practices and pedagogical approaches, preparing them for their future roles as educators.

2.2 Necessity or Importance of Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is widely recognized as the cornerstone of programs that prepare teachers. According to Darling-Hammond (2006), it is crucial for giving student teachers the chance to learn more about the complexities of teaching, such as managing a classroom, attending to each student's unique learning requirements, and creating a supportive learning environment. Also, as noted by Feiman-Nemser (2001), teaching practice also aids student teachers acquire the practical skills necessary for effective teaching. What is more, reflective practitioner development is greatly aided by teaching practice.

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What is more worthy of mentioning, is the tremendous capability of teaching practice in aspiring educators to develop the ability to adapt their teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of students and contexts. As highlighted by Shulman (1987), effective teaching requires an understanding of the unique characteristics and backgrounds of learners, as well as the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which learning occurs. Through teaching practice, student teachers gain insights into the diverse needs, interests, and learning styles of students, allowing them to tailor their instruction to promote engagement, understanding and success. This contextualized approach to teaching and learning prepares student teachers to address the complexities and challenges of the modern classroom.

Last but not least, student teachers can work together with experienced mentor teachers and colleagues during their teaching practice, which promotes a culture of professional development and assistance. Mentor teachers act as mentors and role models, providing student teachers with constructive criticism, direction and support as they work through the challenges of teaching. Hargreaves (1994) asserts that mentorship relationships developed during teaching practice aid in the transfer of professional values, pedagogical knowledge, and practical wisdom from teachers with experience to less experienced ones. Through cooperative learning and shared experiences, student teachers gain the self-assurance, adaptability and resilience required to succeed in a variety of learning environments.

2.3 Challenges Faced by Student Teachers During School Experience

As a vital part of teacher education programs, student teaching gives prospective teachers first-hand experience in real classroom environments. But in addition to the priceless chances for development and education, student teachers face a number of difficulties while they are in the classroom. This section explores the difficulties encountered by student teachers, with an emphasis on their experiences in the classroom.

2.3.1 Challenges Faced by Student Teachers in the Classrooms

When managing the complexities of classroom contexts, student teachers face a variety of problems. These difficulties may have a major effect on their professional growth and style of teaching. Some of the major difficulties that student teachers encounter in the classroom are covered in the following subsections.

2.3.1.1 Difficulties in Lesson Planning

Lesson planning is one of the main obstacles that teacher trainees must overcome. According to Flores and Day (2006), student teachers frequently find it difficult to create and carry out lesson plans that effectively meet the varied requirements of students. This challenge arises from the limited experience and knowledge of instructional strategies, curriculum standards, and assessment practices. Additionally, student teachers may face challenges in aligning their lesson plans with the objectives of the curriculum and addressing the individual learning styles and abilities of students (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Thus, considering the later information; Bhargava (2009) states that, student teachers should have flexibility in the process of writing lesson plans. Instead of forcing their opinions on student teachers, supervisors, and cooperating teachers ought to empower them to explore and figure out what works best for them by utilizing trial and error.

2.3.1.2 Classroom Management

Classroom management presents a major problem for student teachers. To maximize student involvement and accomplishment and to create a positive atmosphere for learning, effective classroom management in crucial. However, according to Korthagen, Loughran and Russell (2006), student teachers might encounter complications enforcing discipline, controlling disruptive behaviors, and developing a good rapport with the students. These difficulties frequently result from a lack of knowledge and assurance about controlling classroom dynamics and putting effective behavior control techniques into practice. Additionally, it was reported by Nasir & Zafar (2018) that student teachers struggled to manage their class time. That is, allocating enough time for each task, spending excessive amounts of time reviewing students' assignments, providing guidance, and recording attendance.

2.3.1.3 Student-Teacher Anxiety

Another common issue that future teachers face in their school experience is student-teacher anxiety. It's not uncommon for teachers to experience anxiety. "Pressure," "lack of confidence," and "nervousness" are other terms that might imply a similar meaning. The majority of student teachers have at least one innate anxiety brought on by their teaching ideas, even though not all of

them experience all types of stress and anxiety (Guillaume & Rudney, as cited in Paker, 2011). Student-teachers are occasionally assigned the same duties as in-service teachers. The notion that student-teachers are not current teachers and instead are learners themselves, may result in an ambiguity for student-teachers who are meant to be making use of teaching practicum as a learning opportunity to teach. (Mtika, 2011). Furthermore, student-teachers experience the challenge of dealing with a wide range of students. One of the challenges that adds to the anxiety is when a student-teacher meets or interacts with passive learners (Rakasiwi, 2013). Passive learners are one of the many things that inevitably cause anxiety in student-teachers since they are seen as real teachers instead of students in training.

2.3.2 Challenges Faced by Student Teachers with the Administrative Staff

Administrative interactions have a significant impact on student teachers' experiences during training. As student teachers interact with administrative staff members, they may face communication, support, and professional relationship issues. These problems can have a substantial impact on their capacity to excel in their professions and effectively contribute to the school community.

During their teaching practice, student teachers face a list of challenges which according to SarÕçobana (2010), consist of Putting hypotheses into practice, selecting a suitable approach of instruction, along with assessing the extent to which the learning objectives had been achieved. most importantly, Inability to provide facilities and additional instructional resources in schools, as well as miscommunication on the part of the school administration, were also mentioned on the list. Moreover, schools are often concerned that the student teachers are unlikely to finish the syllabus and question their capacity to do their jobs efficiently. As it is commonly known, Ministry of Education inspectors prioritize quantity over quality, leading schools and their teachers to prioritize completion of the curriculum in the time frame given to them (Confait, 2015). That is why, changing teachers in the middle of a course, especially when applying new approaches, strategies, and evaluations, is unfavorable. Quite the contrary, Student teachers must participate in activities that support and foster their professional development. Student teachers should experiment in the classroom with their approaches, strategies, and methods, according to Vacilotto and Cummings (2007). Accordingly, it is the school's administration's responsibility to guarantee

that student teachers are taking full advantage of this opportunity by providing proper support during their teaching practice (Abongdia at el., 2015).

2.3.3 Challenges Faced by Student Teachers with the Supervising Teacher(s)

Although interactions between student teachers and supervising teachers are an essential part of the student teaching program, there are times when these interactions might provide difficulties that would obviously reduce the efficiency of teaching practice. The challenges that student teachers might face when collaborating with supervising teachers are examined here.

The absence of explicit expectations and communication from supervising teachers is something to worry about that student teachers frequently encounter. Student teachers may find it difficult to comprehend their tasks and responsibilities in the absence of clear rules and feedback. Therefore, to assist them make the necessary improvements and adjustments to their professional abilities, supervisors of student teachers are expected to provide them with honest and constructive feedback (Mosas, 2019). On the other hand, percentages of the student teachers express dissatisfaction regarding the inadequate feedback they receive from their supervisors. Frequently, the mentor walks off without saying anything or says things that are too general and don't help the student in any way. This is consistent with research conducted by Nakpodia (2011), which found that some supervisors do not even have the time to meet with student teachers to talk about their observations and constructive criticism. Of the twelve student teachers, four stated that some of the educational supervisors would not make any visits, only taking just a glance at the lesson plan notebooks. Likewise, trainees may face challenging expectations from certain supervisors. They fail to comprehend the fact that it is only a period in which they train, a period of formative assessment rather than summative assessment. The opinions and recommendations made by supervisors occasionally disagreed with one another. Also, since no systematic or uniform feedback procedures were used, the methodology they employed was subject to criticism. Student teachers had no choice but to reach out to their fellow class teachers for assistance, as they too were experiencing difficulties due to this negligence. According to Magdeline (2013), it has become imperative to consider the supervision of teaching practice as a crucial responsibility.

Section Three

Experience and Reflection

We faced numerous problems during our teaching practice that put our adaptation and problem-solving skills to the test. From a wide range of student skills to unforeseen circumstances that disrupted teaching time, each challenge was a chance for development and learning. One big problem we faced was the wide range of student proficiency in our classes. Low-level pupils required more time and repetition to completely understand concepts, which often hampered our ability to cover all intended materials. To address this, we adopted individualized assistance measures, such as inviting problematic students for further explanations during breaks, which proved to be beneficial in increasing knowledge and participation.

Furthermore, many school events like Flag Day made teaching difficult because they cut into our time. Collaborating with colleagues to change schedules helped to alleviate this problem, ensuring that critical instructional time was not lost. Similarly, the tight structure of daily procedures, such as dictations and revisions, limited the opportunity for efficient lesson delivery. We modified our technique by shortening dictations and including theoretical explanations, which allowed us to maximize teaching time.

 Another big problem was managing disruptive conduct, which regularly disrupted the classroom environment. Implementing disciplinary actions and reiterating expectations helps to maintain classroom order and build a positive learning environment. Furthermore, dealing with unanticipated scenarios, such as unplanned tests or variations in exam preparation across classes, necessitated excellent communication and oversight to ensure equitable treatment for all students. It was difficult to balance responsibilities between several classes, especially when there were timetable conflicts. Working together with the management of the school led to changes in the class schedule that made it possible for us to successfully carry out our teaching duties. These encounters emphasized the value of proactive problem-solving, adaptability, and efficient communication in negotiating the challenges of teaching practice. Upon reflection, we saw that every obstacle offered a chance for development and education, encouraging resiliency and flexibility in our teaching methods. We were able to improve our kids' educational experiences and create a happy, encouraging environment in the classroom by working together to solve

problems and put creative solutions into practice. As we proceed on our educational journey, we are steadfast in our resolve to see obstacles as chances for improvement and to keep improving to better serve the changing needs of our students.

During our teaching practice, we also faced the problem of little student interest and absenteeism. There were times when students showed little interest in participating in class activities or were regularly missing from class, even though we attempted to provide an engaging and supportive learning environment. This event brought to light the variety of complicated factors that can affect students' participation and attendance in the classroom. It is important to understand that outside factors including personal circumstances, family responsibilities, and socioeconomic background might affect students' capacity to attend and participate in class consistently, even though we work hard to provide engaging lessons and build a positive classroom environment.

As we move forward, we understand how critical it is to establish trusting connections with children and their families to better understand their unique needs and difficulties. We can assist in addressing obstacles to attendance and participation and fostering a more inclusive learning environment for all students by establishing open channels of communication and providing support and resources. Furthermore, we recognize how crucial it is to design engaging and interactive classes that suit a range of interests and learning styles. Engaging students with practical exercises, group discussions, and real-world applications can help spark their interest and encourage active learning.

All things considered, this experience serves as a reminder of the value of adaptability, compassion, and proactive communication when dealing with issues relating to student participation and attendance. Collaborating with students, families, and colleagues, we can establish a welcoming and inclusive learning environment that supports each student's academic achievement and personal development.

Section Four

Conclusion

Student teachers have a wide range of complex and varied difficulties while putting their teaching skills into the real world, from adjusting to the varying skills and behaviors of their students to dealing with unforeseen circumstances and communication breakdowns among faculty members. All in all, we have gained invaluable knowledge on the significance of flexibility, teamwork, and communication in overcoming these obstacles and creating a supportive learning environment for our students from our teaching experiences. However, student teachers may turn challenges into chances for learning and growth by approaching them with perseverance, creativity, and a growth mindset. Student instructors can provide inclusive and supportive learning environments that cater to the different needs of their students by using personalized support strategies, establishing efficient communication channels, and engaging in collaborative problem-solving.

Moreover, these challenges function as beneficial educational opportunities that make student instructors ready for the intricacies of the classroom and provide them with the knowledge and abilities, they need to become proficient teachers. To overcome obstacles and keep developing their practice, student teachers must continue to be proactive, introspective, and open-minded throughout their career in education. Indeed, difficulties student teachers encounter when putting their teaching skills into practice are a crucial component of their professional growth, influencing how they see successful teaching strategies and strengthening their resolve to promote the academic achievement of all students. Student instructors can develop the abilities, information, and mindset required to succeed as educators and have a good influence on their students' lives by meeting these problems head-on with resiliency and dedication.

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