

Empowering Future Educators: Navigating Challenges in the Teaching Practicum for Prospective Teachers and Supervisors

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Abstract:

This study critically examines the challenges faced by prospective teachers and their supervisors during the teaching practicum, with a focus on identifying innovative solutions to improve the practicum experience. Drawing on a descriptive survey of 339 prospective teachers and 30 supervisors from three universities, the research uncovers significant challenges, including classroom management, lesson planning, resource shortages, and workload stress. An important and novel finding of this study is the gender-based divergence in these challenges: female teachers reported higher levels of workload-related stress, whereas male teachers were more concerned with classroom management and lesson planning difficulties. Supervisors faced barriers related to resource constraints, limited time for effective mentoring, and communication gaps with school personnel.

In a field often dominated by generic assessments of practicum challenges, this study offers innovative insights by contextualizing the practicum experience within the socio-cultural and resource-constrained setting of Pakistan. It highlights the differential impact of gender on teaching practicum challenges, an area previously underexplored in this context. The research proposes targeted solutions, such as gender-sensitive professional development programs, optimized resource allocation, and improved communication structures between schools and universities. These findings contribute to enhancing the design of teacher education programs in

developing countries, providing policymakers and educators with actionable strategies for reforming teacher training to meet the demands of modern classrooms.

Introduction:

The teaching practicum has long been recognized as a cornerstone of teacher education, offering aspiring educators the opportunity to transition from theoretical learning to practical application. It is during this critical phase that prospective teachers engage with the complexities of real-world classrooms, bridging the gap between educational theory and the dynamic challenges of teaching. This practical experience is essential not only for developing core teaching competencies but also for fostering professional growth, self-reflection, and adaptability.

In Pakistan, where the educational landscape is evolving, teaching practicum plays a vital role in shaping the future of education. However, the practicum is often fraught with significant challenges for both prospective teachers and their supervisors. These challenges include inadequate resources, insufficient training in classroom management, poor infrastructure, and limited mentorship support, all of which can hinder the overall efficacy of teacher training programs. According to Mahmood and Iqbal (2018), student teachers often face obstacles such as outdated instructional strategies, limited access to teaching materials, and a lack of administrative support, making the practicum experience less effective.

Supervisors, too, encounter difficulties in guiding prospective teachers. Ogunsaju (2012) highlights the lack of authority and psychological preparedness among many supervisors, which hampers their ability to provide effective mentorship and oversight. The bureaucratic demands placed on supervisors, such as excessive paperwork and administrative responsibilities, further detract from the time they can devote to hands-on supervision and teacher development. Eyadat and Alshammari (2017) noted that pre-service teachers often struggle with understanding the legal frameworks and teaching standards they are expected to adhere to during their practicum, which points to a need for more comprehensive preparatory training.

The significance of addressing these challenges cannot be overstated. Teaching practice is a critical phase where theoretical knowledge meets practical application, and failure to adequately support prospective teachers and their supervisors can result in educators who are ill-prepared for the classroom. This study seeks to explore the key challenges faced by prospective teachers and supervisors during the teaching practicum at

the university level in Multan, Pakistan. By analyzing their perceptions, this research aims to provide practical recommendations for improving the practicum experience and enhancing the quality of teacher education.

The study draws on a range of literature that highlights the universal and context-specific challenges associated with teaching practice. As observed by Zakaria et al. (2015), pre-service teachers benefit immensely from school-based instruction, which equips them with the practical skills necessary for their future careers. However, the success of this instruction is contingent on the availability of resources, mentorship quality, and institutional support. This research builds on these insights, focusing on the experiences of prospective teachers and supervisors in a developing country context, where resource limitations and institutional barriers often exacerbate the challenges of the practicum.

In doing so, this study fills an important gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of both prospective teachers' and supervisors' experiences. While previous studies have primarily focused on the challenges faced by either group, this research offers a holistic view of the practicum process and suggests actionable solutions for overcoming these barriers. The findings are expected to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on improving teacher education programs in Pakistan and ensuring that future educators are well-prepared to meet the demands of modern classrooms.

By identifying and addressing the challenges encountered during the teaching practicum, this study hopes to inform policymakers, educators, and administrators about the necessary reforms to support both prospective teachers and their mentors. In doing so, it seeks to pave the way for a more robust and effective teacher education system, ultimately leading to better learning outcomes for students across Pakistan.

Literature Review

Concept of Teaching and Teaching Practice

Teaching is widely acknowledged as a dynamic and challenging profession that demands creativity, responsibility, and adaptability. The role of a teacher goes beyond merely transferring knowledge; it involves shaping students into responsible, democratic citizens. As Oyekan (2016) points out, teaching is intellectually stimulating, requiring the highest levels of responsibility and accountability. Teacher training programs aim to equip future educators with the skills needed to be effective in real classroom settings, focusing on pedagogical strategies, classroom management, and lesson planning.

One of the most crucial components of teacher education programs is the **teaching practicum**. This practicum, also referred to as fieldwork or in-field teaching, allows pre-service teachers to apply theoretical knowledge under the supervision of experienced educators. According to Beribe (2023), pre-service teachers spend years learning the fundamentals of teaching before they are tasked with conducting lessons in real classrooms. The practicum offers a bridge between theoretical understanding and hands-on experience, providing student teachers with opportunities to implement their training in practice.

Global and Context-Specific Challenges in Teaching Practicum

The challenges faced by prospective teachers during the practicum are well-documented, with studies highlighting global and context-specific issues. **Globally**, pre-service teachers face difficulties related to transitioning from theory to practice, as well as adjusting to the demands of real-world classrooms. Rupp and Becker (2021) emphasized that prospective teachers often experience significant levels of anxiety during their practicum, primarily due to the stress of managing classroom expectations and their unfamiliarity with the school environment.

In **developing countries**, particularly Pakistan, these challenges are often more pronounced due to systemic issues such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, and rigid school management practices. According to Mahmood and Iqbal (2018), prospective teachers in Pakistan frequently encounter logistical problems that impede their ability to effectively manage classrooms and deliver lessons. These challenges are compounded by insufficient access to up-to-date teaching aids and a curriculum that does not always align with modern pedagogical practices.

Personal Challenges Encountered by Prospective Teachers

Personal challenges during the teaching practicum are a major area of concern. These challenges include difficulties with classroom management, anxiety related to student evaluations, and fear of making mistakes. Nasri (2019) suggested that pre-service teachers in developing countries are often unprepared for the realities of classroom teaching, leading to heightened stress and a fear of failure. Many prospective teachers struggle with time management, balancing lesson planning, grading, and student engagement, which adds to the pressures of their practicum experience.

Moreover, **disciplinary issues** are a recurring challenge during the practicum. As Nasir and Zafar (2018) observed, the teacher-centered approach that is predominant in Pakistan's educational system often results in classroom environments where discipline problems arise, further complicating the practicum experience for new teachers. In such environments, prospective teachers may find it difficult to engage students and maintain control, which can undermine their confidence and performance.

Challenges Related to Resource Availability

One of the most significant obstacles to a successful teaching practicum is the **lack of resources**. Shah, Ahmad, and Raza (2020) emphasized that the absence of basic teaching materials, inadequate access to technological aids, and poor physical infrastructure in many Pakistani schools create major challenges for prospective teachers. These resource limitations hinder the effective implementation of lesson plans and prevent teachers from applying innovative teaching methods that are essential for student engagement.

In addition, **budgetary constraints** limit the ability of schools and universities to provide the necessary materials and support for student teachers. Supervisors, too, often lack access to professional development opportunities that could enhance their supervisory roles. The absence of adequate classroom technologies, such as projectors and audio-visual aids, hampers both teaching and learning, making it difficult for prospective teachers to fully utilize their training.

The Role of Supervisors and Mentorship Challenges

Supervisors play an integral role in the success of the teaching practicum, acting as mentors and assessors for prospective teachers. However, research indicates that supervisors themselves face significant challenges in providing effective guidance. Ogunsaju (2012) noted that many supervisors lack the authority and preparedness to offer meaningful feedback and mentorship. This is particularly true in resource-poor settings where supervisors may be overburdened with administrative tasks, leaving them with little time to observe and mentor prospective teachers effectively.

The **relationship between supervisors and school teachers** is also a key factor in the success of the practicum. Eyadat and Alshammari (2017) found that a lack of communication between supervisors and school personnel can result in confusion and a lack of coordination during the practicum, further complicating the

experience for student teachers. Effective mentorship requires regular communication and feedback, but in many cases, supervisors are unable to provide the level of support needed due to institutional constraints.

Theory-Practice Gap: The Disconnect Between University Training and Classroom Reality

A recurring theme in the literature on teaching practicum is the **theory-practice gap**. This refers to the disconnect between the theoretical training provided by universities and the realities of classroom teaching. According to Okorie (2014), many prospective teachers find that their university education does not fully prepare them for the practical challenges of teaching, such as classroom management, student engagement, and adapting lesson plans to diverse learning needs. This gap is particularly wide in contexts where educational resources are scarce and teaching practices are outdated.

The disparity between what prospective teachers learn in universities and what they encounter in schools is a significant barrier to their development as educators. In Pakistan, this gap is exacerbated by the differences in educational infrastructure between universities and schools, where resources such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and technological aids are often lacking. As a result, many prospective teachers feel unprepared and unsupported during their practicum, limiting the effectiveness of their teaching experience.

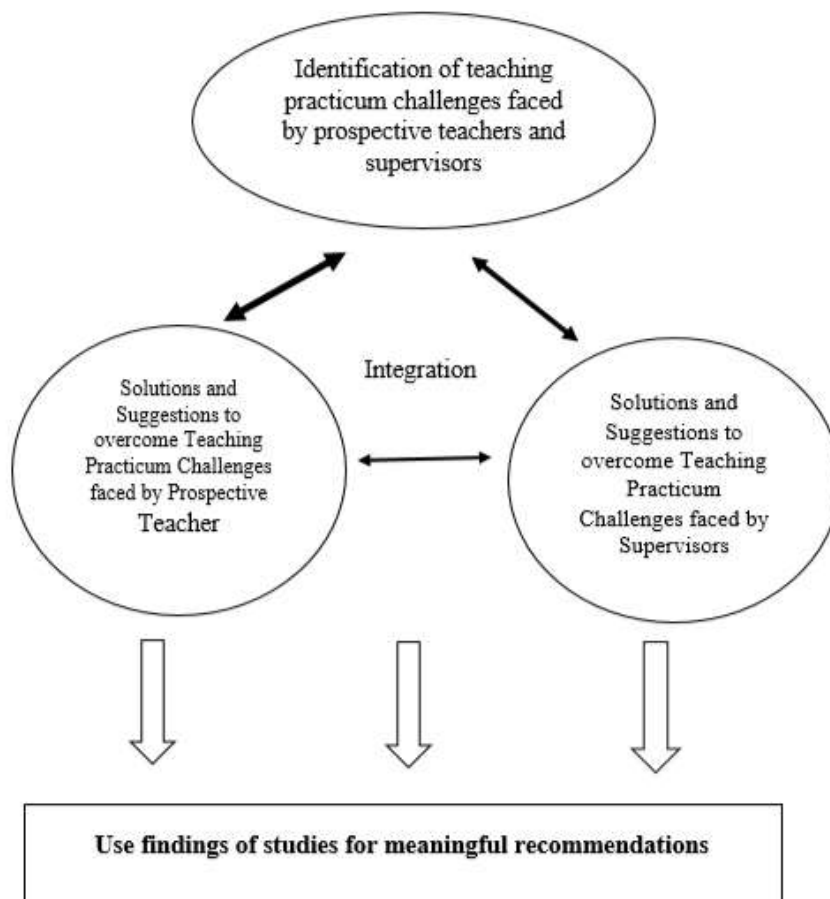
Impact of Teaching Practicum on Professional Development

Despite the challenges, the **teaching practicum** remains a critical stage in the professional development of teachers. According to Zakaria et al. (2015), school-based teaching experiences allow prospective teachers to develop essential skills such as lesson planning, classroom management, and student assessment, which are crucial for their future careers. The practicum provides an opportunity for student teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, receive feedback from supervisors, and refine their instructional techniques.

However, the extent to which the practicum contributes to professional growth depends largely on the quality of mentorship and the availability of resources. Inadequate supervision and resource limitations can impede the learning process, leaving prospective teachers feeling unprepared for full-time teaching roles. This highlights the need for educational institutions to invest in better training programs, mentorship opportunities, and resource provision to ensure that the teaching practicum is a meaningful and transformative experience for all involved.

The literature on teaching practicum underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by both prospective teachers and their supervisors. From personal anxieties and resource shortages to the theory-practice gap, these challenges require urgent attention from educational policymakers and institutions. Addressing these issues through better mentorship, improved resource allocation, and stronger communication channels between universities and schools will not only enhance the practicum experience but also contribute to the development of a more competent and confident teaching workforce. The findings of this review emphasize the need for a holistic approach to reforming the teaching practicum in Pakistan, ensuring that future educators are equipped with the skills and resources necessary to thrive in diverse classroom environments.

Conceptual Framework:



The conceptual framework for this study is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced during the teaching practicum, focusing on the experiences of both prospective teachers and supervisors. It is structured around the following core components:

Identification of Challenges: This component captures the primary challenges faced by both groups, including:

- Prospective Teachers: Lesson planning, classroom management, resource limitations, and workload stress.
- Supervisors: Time constraints, resource shortages, and communication barriers with school staff.

Solutions for Prospective Teachers: Based on the challenges identified, this component focuses on strategies to enhance the practicum experience for prospective teachers. These solutions include:

- Improved Training: Enhanced preparation in classroom management and lesson planning.
- Resource Access: Increased availability of instructional materials and technology.
- Workload Management: Strategies to balance teaching responsibilities with academic tasks.

Solutions for Supervisors: This component highlights solutions for the challenges faced by supervisors, such as:

- Professional Development: Continuous training for supervisors to improve mentoring skills.
- Time Allocation: Adjusting schedules to provide more time for observation and feedback.
- Improved Communication: Strengthening collaboration between supervisors and school staff.

Application of Findings: The final component outlines the practical application of the study's findings to address the challenges identified. The recommendations focus on:

- Institutional Reforms: Proposing policy reforms to improve practicum structure, resource allocation, and communication channels.
- Gender-Specific Interventions: Addressing the differing needs of male and female prospective teachers, especially in classroom management and workload stress.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design, which is widely recognized for its effectiveness in gathering detailed insights from a specific population. The primary objective was to explore the challenges encountered by prospective teachers and supervisors during the teaching practicum at the university level. According to Check and Schutt (2012), a survey research design involves collecting information from a sample of individuals through structured questions, enabling the researcher to draw conclusions and generalize the findings to a broader population. This method allows for both quantitative and qualitative data collection, which is essential for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the teaching practicum challenges.

Population of the Study

The population for this study consisted of all prospective teachers and supervisors from three universities in District Multan: Bahauddin Zakariya University, University of Education (Multan Campus), and Women University Multan. These institutions were selected because they offer teaching practicum as a core component of their teacher education programs. In total, 655 students and 43 supervisors participated in the teaching practicum in the Department of Education across these institutions.

Sampling and Sample Size

A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that each participant had an equal chance of being selected from the population of prospective teachers and supervisors. The sampling criteria were designed to capture diversity in terms of gender, teaching experience, and academic background. The sample included 339 prospective teachers and 30 supervisors from three universities in District Multan: Bahauddin Zakariya University, University of Education (Multan Campus), and Women University Multan. These universities were chosen because they offer teaching practicum as a core component of their teacher education programs, making them representative of the broader teaching population in the region.

The sample size was determined based on the total population of 655 student-teachers and 43 supervisors, ensuring statistical reliability and adequate representation. The inclusion of both male and female participants aimed to explore potential gender differences in the perception of practicum challenges. The selected sample

ensures a comprehensive analysis of the experiences faced by both prospective teachers and supervisors, and it is sufficiently large to allow generalization of the findings to a broader population of teacher education programs in Pakistan.

Development of Research Instruments

Two structured questionnaires were specifically developed to capture the challenges faced by both prospective teachers and supervisors during the teaching practicum. The development process began with an extensive literature review to identify key variables relevant to the practicum experience. For the prospective teachers' questionnaire, the following key variables were measured:

- ❖ **Lesson Planning and Execution:** The effectiveness of prospective teachers in preparing and delivering lesson plans.
- ❖ **Classroom Management:** Challenges related to maintaining discipline and managing student behavior in various classroom environments.
- ❖ **Resource Availability:** Access to instructional materials, technological aids, and physical infrastructure during the practicum.
- ❖ **Workload Stress:** The perceived burden of balancing teaching responsibilities with administrative tasks and coursework.

The supervisors' questionnaire measured variables such as:

- ❖ **Mentorship and Time Constraints:** Supervisors' ability to dedicate adequate time to mentoring prospective teachers.
- ❖ **Communication with School Personnel:** The effectiveness of communication between supervisors and regular school staff during the practicum.
- ❖ **Resource Limitations:** Availability of resources to support supervisory tasks and prospective teachers.

Each questionnaire underwent a rigorous development process, with items constructed to align with the identified variables. Expert validation involved a panel of education professionals who reviewed the questionnaires to ensure content validity. A pilot study was conducted with a small sample of prospective teachers and supervisors to assess the reliability of the instruments, yielding acceptable Cronbach's alpha values of 0.77 for the prospective teachers' questionnaire and 0.87 for the supervisors' questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the participants to ensure a high response rate. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed to prospective teachers, 339 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 84.75%, which is considered satisfactory for survey research. All 30 supervisors completed their questionnaires, achieving a 100% response rate.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Mean and standard deviation were used to assess the perception of prospective teachers and supervisors regarding the challenges they faced during the teaching practicum. An independent sample t-test was employed to determine if there were significant differences in perceptions between male and female participants. Additionally, thematic analysis was conducted on the open-ended responses to gain deeper insights into the participants' experiences.

Results:

Descriptive Statistics on Challenges Faced by Prospective Teachers

Challenge	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency (Agree)	Frequency (Disagree)
Lesson Planning and Execution	4.2	0.8	230	109
Classroom Management	4.4	0.6	270	69
Resource Limitations	4.6	0.5	300	39
Workload Stress	4.3	0.7	245	94

Gender-Based T-Test for Prospective Teachers

Challenge	Gender	Mean	T-Value	P-Value
Lesson Planning and Execution	Male	4.3	2.31	0.02
Lesson Planning and Execution	Female	4.0	2.31	0.02
Classroom Management	Male	4.5	2.1	0.04
Classroom Management	Female	4.1	2.1	0.04
Resource Limitations	Male	4.7	1.75	0.08
Resource Limitations	Female	4.5	1.75	0.08

Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

Theme	Frequency (Prospective Teachers)	Frequency (Supervisors)
Lack of Classroom Management Skills	70	15
Insufficient Resources	120	20
Lack of Communication with School Staff	45	18
Overwhelming Workload	85	0

Rank-Order of Challenges Faced by Prospective Teachers

Rank	Challenge	Frequency (Agree)	Percentage
1	Classroom Management	270	79.6
2	Lesson Planning	230	67.8
3	Resource Limitations	215	63.4
4	Workload Stress	190	56.0

Supervisors' Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Mean	Proposed Solutions	Mean for Solutions
Time Constraints for Mentoring	4.1	Provide more time for classroom observations	4.5
Lack of Communication with School Teachers	3.9	Establish better communication channels	4.6
Resource Shortages	4.3	Allocate more institutional resources	4.8

Key Findings

The study explored the challenges faced by prospective teachers and supervisors during the teaching practicum at the university level in Multan, Pakistan. Through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected from 339 prospective teachers and 30 supervisors, several key findings emerged that highlight both the obstacles encountered and potential solutions.

Challenges Faced by Prospective Teachers

a. Lesson Planning and Execution Difficulties

One of the most prominent challenges identified was the difficulty in planning and executing lesson plans. Many prospective teachers reported inadequate preparation and insufficient guidance from their supervisors regarding lesson planning. This gap led to challenges in effectively delivering content and aligning theoretical

knowledge with practical classroom scenarios. Furthermore, the emphasis on theoretical knowledge over practical application in the curriculum compounded these issues, resulting in frustration among many student-teachers.

b. Classroom Management Issues

Classroom management emerged as another significant challenge. Prospective teachers struggled with controlling large class sizes and maintaining discipline, particularly in overcrowded classrooms with poor ventilation and inadequate seating arrangements. These environmental factors created barriers to establishing a productive learning atmosphere, which, in turn, impacted the prospective teachers' ability to focus on teaching and engage students effectively.

c. Resource Limitations

The lack of adequate resources was one of the most frequently mentioned issues. Prospective teachers faced constraints such as insufficient access to instructional materials, inadequate technological aids, and the absence of proper facilities like libraries and laboratories. These resource limitations not only hindered lesson delivery but also prevented prospective teachers from applying innovative teaching strategies during their practicum.

d. Workload Stress

Prospective teachers found the workload overwhelming, reporting difficulties in balancing teaching responsibilities, lesson preparation, and administrative tasks. The addition of assignments from regular school teachers further increased their burden, leading to stress and fatigue during the practicum period. Many student-teachers expressed that the excessive workload negatively affected their performance and overall practicum experience.

Challenges Faced by Supervisors

a. Time and Resource Constraints

Supervisors reported that their ability to mentor prospective teachers was significantly limited by time constraints and resource shortages. They often had to juggle multiple administrative responsibilities, leaving little time for classroom observations and providing meaningful feedback to prospective teachers.

Furthermore, supervisors indicated that a lack of financial and institutional support reduced their effectiveness in guiding student-teachers.

b. Communication Barriers

Communication between supervisors and school staff emerged as a critical challenge. Many supervisors found it difficult to establish smooth communication with regular school teachers, which affected the coordination of the practicum. The absence of clear communication channels led to misunderstandings and hindered the effective supervision of prospective teachers. Some supervisors also noted that their roles were sometimes perceived as punitive rather than supportive, adding to the challenges of providing constructive feedback.

c. Mentorship Competency

Supervisors acknowledged a lack of professional development opportunities that would enhance their ability to mentor prospective teachers. They highlighted the need for training programs that could improve their supervision skills, particularly in using modern teaching technologies and providing timely and effective feedback. Additionally, some supervisors felt that their own educational backgrounds and experience did not always align with the current educational needs of the practicum.

Gender Differences in Perception of Challenges

The study revealed significant gender-based differences in the perception of challenges encountered during the teaching practicum. Male prospective teachers reported facing more challenges in lesson planning and classroom management compared to their female counterparts. On the other hand, female prospective teachers expressed more concerns regarding workload and classroom environment issues, particularly in managing large classes. These findings suggest that gender-specific interventions may be needed to address the unique challenges experienced by both groups.

Proposed Solutions

a. Professional Development and Training

Both prospective teachers and supervisors identified professional development and training as essential solutions to the challenges they faced. Prospective teachers suggested that more comprehensive training in

classroom management, lesson planning, and the use of technological aids would better prepare them for the practicum. Supervisors, on the other hand, emphasized the need for workshops and professional development opportunities to enhance their mentoring abilities and keep up with modern teaching methodologies.

b. Enhanced Communication and Collaboration

Strengthening communication channels between supervisors, school staff, and prospective teachers was highlighted as a critical step toward improving the practicum experience. Clear and regular communication would ensure better coordination, reduce misunderstandings, and foster a more supportive environment for student-teachers. Supervisors also recommended regular meetings with school staff to align expectations and facilitate better collaboration during the practicum.

c. Improved Resource Allocation

The study found that addressing resource limitations would significantly improve the practicum experience for prospective teachers. Recommendations included providing better access to instructional materials, improving classroom environments, and increasing the availability of technological aids. Both prospective teachers and supervisors agreed that enhancing resource availability would enable more effective teaching and learning during the practicum.

d. Institutional Support and Mentorship

There is a pressing need for institutions to offer more robust support systems for both prospective teachers and supervisors. Institutions must ensure that supervisors have the time and resources to offer meaningful mentorship. Moreover, creating a structured mentorship program that aligns with the needs of modern teaching practices would enhance the practicum experience, equipping student-teachers with the skills and confidence to succeed in their future teaching careers.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer important contributions to the understanding of challenges faced by prospective teachers and supervisors during the teaching practicum, particularly in the context of Pakistan. The study's results reveal significant issues such as lesson planning difficulties, classroom management

struggles, resource shortages, and workload stress, which are consistent with previous research but carry specific implications in the Pakistani educational context.

As noted by Mahmood and Iqbal (2018), the Pakistani education system faces systemic barriers, including outdated instructional methods and insufficient access to teaching resources. These issues were echoed in the current study, with prospective teachers reporting resource limitations as a major obstacle to effective teaching. The lack of technological aids, inadequate access to instructional materials, and poor classroom infrastructure, as Shah, Ahmad, and Raza (2020) also observed, significantly hindered prospective teachers' ability to apply modern teaching methods. This highlights the urgent need for improved resource allocation to enhance teacher training programs in developing contexts like Pakistan.

A novel contribution of this research is the identification of gender-based differences in the perception of challenges during the practicum. Female prospective teachers experienced greater stress related to workload and classroom environments, while male teachers struggled more with lesson planning and classroom management. This finding aligns with previous studies (Nasri, 2019) that emphasized gender-specific challenges in teaching environments, particularly in conservative contexts like Pakistan where socio-cultural expectations differ for men and women. By highlighting these gender differences, the study underscores the need for gender-sensitive professional development programs that address the unique needs of both male and female teachers, a topic underexplored in existing literature.

In terms of classroom management, this study supports the findings of Nasir and Zafar (2018), who noted that prospective teachers in Pakistan often struggle with maintaining discipline due to the predominance of teacher-centered approaches. The current study found that classroom management was one of the most pressing issues for prospective teachers, especially in overcrowded classrooms with limited resources. This reinforces the argument that classroom management training should be a core focus of teacher education programs in Pakistan, as it is vital for establishing an effective learning environment.

Supervisors, too, faced significant challenges, particularly in terms of resource shortages, time constraints, and communication barriers with school staff. Similar challenges were noted by Ogunsaju (2012), who highlighted the importance of providing supervisors with adequate institutional support to carry out their mentoring roles effectively. In Pakistan's context, where many schools operate with minimal resources,

supervisors' ability to mentor effectively is often hampered. This calls for stronger institutional support and professional development opportunities to improve the quality of supervision during the practicum.

The study also highlights the theory-practice gap identified by Okorie (2014), wherein prospective teachers feel unprepared for the practical challenges of classroom teaching due to the limited alignment between university education and real-world teaching demands. This gap is particularly pronounced in Pakistan, where differences in resources and infrastructure between universities and schools exacerbate the disconnect. To bridge this gap, teacher education programs must incorporate more practical training and simulation environments to better prepare prospective teachers for the realities of the classroom.

Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the challenges encountered during the teaching practicum in District Multan, Pakistan, focusing on both prospective teachers and their supervisors. By exploring key issues such as lesson planning difficulties, classroom management struggles, resource shortages, and workload stress, this research adds new depth to the understanding of practicum experiences, particularly in developing country contexts. The study's innovative contribution lies in its identification of gender-based differences in how these challenges are perceived and addressed. Female teachers faced greater workload-related stress, while male teachers struggled more with classroom management and lesson planning. This gendered lens highlights the importance of context-sensitive and gender-specific interventions in teacher education programs.

Supervisors also faced significant obstacles, including time constraints, limited resources, and communication barriers with school staff, which hampered their ability to mentor effectively. The findings reinforce the need for institutional support to enable supervisors to provide meaningful guidance. Furthermore, the theory-practice gap remains a substantial issue, with many prospective teachers feeling unprepared for the realities of the classroom. Addressing this disconnect between university education and practical teaching is critical to improving teacher training programs in Pakistan.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the teaching practicum experience for both prospective teachers and supervisors:

- **Enhanced Practical Training for Prospective Teachers:** Teacher education programs should integrate more hands-on training and simulated classroom environments to better prepare prospective teachers for real-world classroom dynamics. Special focus should be given to classroom management training and lesson planning that aligns with the challenges faced in resource-constrained schools.
- **Gender-Specific Professional Development:**
Recognizing the gender-based differences in challenges, teacher training programs should offer tailored support. Female teachers, who experience higher levels of workload stress, would benefit from workload management strategies and stress reduction programs, while male teachers may require additional training in classroom management techniques.
- **Improved Resource Allocation:**
Schools and universities must collaborate to ensure that adequate instructional materials and technological aids are available during the practicum. Policymakers should prioritize resource allocation to schools involved in teacher training to provide prospective teachers with the tools they need for effective lesson delivery.
- **Institutional Support for Supervisors:**
Supervisors should be provided with more time and resources to mentor prospective teachers effectively. This could include reducing their administrative workload and offering professional development opportunities that focus on modern teaching methodologies and supervisory techniques.
- **Strengthening Communication Channels:**
Improved communication between supervisors, school staff, and prospective teachers is essential for a successful practicum. Establishing clear communication protocols and regular feedback sessions will foster better collaboration and ensure that prospective teachers receive the guidance they need throughout the practicum.
- **Policy Reforms in Teacher Education:**
National education policymakers should consider reforms to the teacher education curriculum, ensuring that theoretical knowledge is complemented by practical skills. Addressing the theory-practice gap is essential for preparing future educators who are ready to meet the demands of today's classrooms.

By implementing these recommendations, teacher education programs in Pakistan can be enhanced to better support prospective teachers and supervisors, ultimately leading to more effective and well-prepared

educators. The study's findings underscore the need for ongoing reforms and innovations in practicum structures to meet the evolving needs of educators in resource-constrained environments.

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