

# The concept of teaching practicum



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Teaching practicum concerns preparation of teachers and its use has embraced all the learning experiences of student teachers in schools. The purpose of reviewing related literature is to explore ideas of teaching practicum. This review will discuss three main ideas, namely, overview of the concept of beliefs and teaching practicum, theoretical framework and related research studies.

## **2. 1 The concept of teaching practicum**

Teaching practicum is almost universally accepted today as the climax of a teacher's professional preparation in pre-service teacher education programs. According to the studies of Gower & Walters (1983), the teaching practice programme is the major essential component in professional education. Teaching practicum is defined as those periods of continuous practice twelve weeks (depends on the particular teacher training college or university) in school constitute an obligatory part of the course in colleges or universities of education. This period of practical experience is also called by various term, clinical experience, student teaching, teaching practice as well as practicum. During the teaching practicum, student teacher conducts classroom lessons and performs the duties of a teacher in school.

According to the Teacher Training Division Guidelines on practicum for pre-service teacher training (2005), teaching practicum provide opportunities for student teacher to practice theories in teaching and learning practices and to develop individual teaching and learning theories. The main aim of teaching practicum is to produce effective school teachers and not merely classroom teacher. Student teachers are also provided with opportunities for a variety of encounters with children in schools. This means that student teachers are

not only know how to teach effectively in class but are also able to handle co-curricular activities as well. In short, teaching practicum programme is to equip future teachers with the essential experiences which can lead to the development of their professional competencies. Teaching practicum aims for student teachers to master and practice all the concepts, principles, skills and values in order to become a professional teacher.

## **2. 2 What is belief ?**

According to Michaela Borg (2001), belief is a proposition which may consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and there imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as guide to thought and behaviour. On the other hand, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define belief as information, factual, and nonfactual cognitions. Cognition is described as “ what someone knows or assumes to be true” (Berkowitz, 1980, p. 275).

No matter what is one’s belief, the beliefs still play an important role in many aspects of teaching, as well as in life. It is because these beliefs help individuals make sense of the world, influencing how new information is perceived, and whether it is accepted or rejected. Nevertheless, beliefs differ from knowledge, although they are related to each other, in that beliefs do not always represent the truth. Beliefs are not only considered as discipline-dependent (Tsai, 2002), but beliefs also include understandings, assumptions, images or propositions that are felt to be true (Kagan, 1992 Richardson, 1996).

## **2. 3 Theoretical framework**

### **2. 3. 1 Teachers' Beliefs**

Shulman (1986) claimed that a teacher needs to know about the subject matter, to know a variety of general instructional strategies, and to know about the specific strategies necessary for teaching particular subject matter. Most of us would also agree that the good teacher transforms curriculum goals and guidelines in such a way that a particular student is able to master and understand the related content. Dan Lortie states that one's personal predispositions are not only relevant but, in fact, stand at the core of becoming a teacher. Teachers' belief is a term usually used to refer to teacher's pedagogic beliefs, or those beliefs of relevance to an individual teaching. The areas most commonly explored are teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and learners; subject matter; self as a teacher, or the role of a teacher (Calderhead, 1995).

Besides that, teachers' beliefs do play a central role in the process of teacher development. Those beliefs form part of the process of understanding how teachers' conceptualize their work as a teacher. Tatto's (1996, p. 155) important work on beliefs concluded "lay cultural norms among enrollees are strongly ingrained and that most teacher education, as it is currently structured, is a weak intervention to alter particular views regarding the teaching and management of diverse learners".

Another study shows that "a person's belief system has pervasive effects in different spheres of activity- ideological, conceptual, perceptual, and esthetic" (Rokeach, 1960, p. 288). In addition, Brown found that certain philosophical beliefs and educational beliefs were effective in predicting

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agreement-disagreement with experimentalism of classroom practice. “ Indications were that professed educational beliefs had a generalized effect on teaching behavior; specific fundamental beliefs were most powerful in influencing specific classroom behaviors” (Brown & Webb, 1968, p. 215). To support those beliefs, Clark and Peterson (1986) proposed that:

The most resilient or ‘ core’ teachers’ beliefs are formed on the basis of teachers’ own schooling as young students while observing teachers who taught them. Subsequent teacher education appears not to disturb these early beliefs, not least, perhaps, because it rarely addresses them.

If teachers actually try out a particular innovation which does not initially conform to their prior beliefs or principles and the innovation proves helpful or successful, then accommodation of an alternative belief or principle is more possible than in any other circumstance.

For the novice teacher, classroom experience and day to day interaction with colleagues has the potential to influence particular relationships among beliefs and principles, and, over time, consolidate the individual’s permutation of them. Nevertheless, it seems that greater experience does not lead to greater adaptability in our beliefs and, thereby, the abandonment of strongly held pedagogic principles. Quite the contrary in fact. The more experience we have, the more reliant on our ‘ core’ principles we have become and the less conscious we are doing so.

Professional development which engages teachers in a direct exploration of their beliefs and principles may provide the opportunity for greater self-

awareness through reflection and critical questioning as starting points for later adaptation.

The teachers' conceptualizations of, for example, language, learning, and teaching are situated within that person's wider belief system concerning such issues as human nature, culture, society, education and so on.

Consequently, teachers' belief about the importance of teaching have a great impact on their teaching practices (Salmon, 1988). The next section will look at teachers' belief about teaching practicum.

### **2.3.2 Teachers' belief about teaching practicum**

The term 'practicum' is used generically to refer to the different types of school attachment; namely, school experience, teaching assistantship, teaching practice and so forth that pre-service students will be undergoing as part their initial teacher preparation programme. The school-based practicum is designed to enable student teachers to observe a teacher's real work of work, and to apply and refine the knowledge and skills acquired through course-work in classroom teaching. Student teachers are to use the opportunities during the practicum to integrate education theory and practice and to widen their practical experiences.

In the context of teaching practicum, a student teacher is expected to apply what they have learned theoretically. To maximize the utility of practicum, it is important that teacher trainers actively promote the effective learning during the practicum period. Effective learning should be concerned with the learning of organized wholes of knowledge. It is a process that involves developing the ability to identify the objectives one is seeking and, within a

flexible framework, optimizing a programme to meet these objectives, in line with individual learning attributes. Effective learning also needs to achieve transference of knowledge from the artificiality of a training course, to practical application where the trainees adapts acquired knowledge to the perceived needs of a particular problem or situation (Robotham, 2003).

Many researches claim that teaching practicum is a central element in most pre-service teacher education programmes. Many also debates about the assessment of the practice of student teachers often reflect ongoing philosophical debates about the nature of teacher education (Brown, 1996) and traditional barriers between teachers and academics (Groundwater-Smith, 1997). A set of written criteria used to assess the competence of pre-service secondary teacher education students during practicum. The dimensions of the assessment protocol did not appear to be based on any articulated theory of good teaching practice, and there were significant doubts about the extent to which the various groups of stakeholders had a shared understanding of the standards implied in the criteria. In education what we label as standards are socially constructed and frequently fuzzy (Sadler, 1987) and require the shared understanding of a construct in a community of practice (Wiliam, 1996).

## **2. 4 Related Research Studies**

### **2. 4. 1 Pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching practicum**

Prior to actual teaching experiences, pre-service teachers derive their initial views on teaching from at least two sources. Firstly, it comes from their personal experiences as students, consisting of their interactions with and exposures to various teachers throughout their school life, with such factors <https://assignbuster.com/the-concept-of-teaching-practicum/>

having a tendency to influence their reasons for career choice, as well as beliefs and practices on their professional lives (Ben-Petetz, 2003; Bramald, Hardman, & Leat, 1995; Saban, 2003). Secondly, it results from pre-service teachers forming their conceptual repertoires as they undergo the formal training provided by teacher educational programs (Bermald, 1995; Dunkin, Precian, & Nettle, 1994; Nettle, 1998), initially consisting of theoretical knowledge through foundation and methods courses, and eventually progressing or culminating into the application of such theories via the so-called practice teaching.

Few studies have been done in pre-service teachers. The following assumptions are fundamental to a justification of practice as a part of the training of teachers:

Teaching is behavior, and as behavior is subject to analysis, change, and improvement.

Much of the habitual behavior which individuals have developed in other contexts is inappropriate for the teaching situation.

Under present conditions, much teaching is conducted under conditions of stress.

Teaching is an extremely complex kind of behavior, involving the full range of thought processes, communication and physical action.

Teachers, through practice can learn to analyze, criticize and control their own teaching behavior.



Practice has the dual purpose of training and the elimination of the unfit.

Practice provides the experience which gives meaning to many other aspects of instruction in education (teaching).

The beliefs of pre-service TESL teachers have may merit their own exploration. These beliefs may influence students in acquisition of knowledge, selection and definition of specific teaching tasks, and interpretation of knowledge, and interpretation of course content. Puchta (1999) asserts that ‘ beliefs are guiding principles of our students’ behavior and strong perceptual filters... they act as if they were true’. On the other hand, Dunkin (1994) claims that how student-teachers’ views on teaching may be influenced by formal teaching practicum programme. Kennedy (1996) hypothesizes that ‘ real and effective change in teachers’ practices can only occur through a change in their beliefs... the way teachers behave’.