

Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions on Internship in Relation to Integrated and Specific Professional Teaching Courses: A Study

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Abstract

Internship has an essential role in developing the teaching competency of the pre-service teachers. The objective of this research was to explore the perceptions of teachers under training towards various aspects of internship. Further this study also aimed to compare the perspectives of student teachers enrolled in 4-year integrated and two year specific professional courses. The sample included 250 student teachers from Regional Institute of Education, Bhubhaneswar who had recently completed their internship. Out of 250 students, 150 were from 4-year integrated courses and 100 were from two year courses. Purposive sampling was used for this study. The data collection and analysis revealed that most of the student teachers agreed to the fact that internship is very important as a part of any teachers' training program. Further the findings of the study revealed that there were significant differences in the perceptions of student teachers of integrated and specific courses with respect to appropriateness of duration of internship, number of lesson plans assigned, practice of teaching skills and use of ICT in classroom during internship

Key Words: Pre-service teachers, internship, integrated professional courses, specific professional courses

Introduction

Internship has been used as a general notion throughout history. Some research studies in 1980's, directly brought practical aspect of teaching into light which led to the inclusion of practical training in various disciplines of professional teaching courses (Moshfegh Arani, 2003). Raouf (1996) in his study stated that internship puts theory to practice through multiple and cumulated experiences

to build skills for teaching. Internship is often synonymously described as teachers' training, teaching practice, and internship. It is the sum of all activities which requires each participant's undivided attention. Learning situations create opportunities for interns' success and failure. Through immersion in a real working classroom, the teachers under training experience several facets of becoming a teacher, like "classroom management, motivation, reflective thinking,

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and differentiation" (Chennat, 2014; Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). In educational institutions, pre-service teachers learn theories and methodologies, then apply them in internships with direction, support, and increased responsibility. The Internship program's main goal is to build and refine pre-service trainees' skills while also preparing them for the profession. It allows new applicants to get experience with the professional environment and requirements of contemporary professional standards (Parveen & Mirza, 2012). Internships needed to be planned in such a way to provide broad range of experience, reflective observation, and varied teaching methodologies for learning and problem solving (Darling-Hammond, Gendler & Wise, 1990). The necessity for effective and comprehensive Teacher Education Courses, aimed at enabling pre-service teachers' professional growth, is becoming increasingly apparent. One of the most important factors influencing pre-service teachers' skill development is the length of these courses. Several policies and surveys, like NEP, 2020, have found that four-year professional programs like B.Sc. B.Ed. and B.A. B.Ed. offer several advantages over two-year B.Ed. courses. The integrated model offers a more comprehensive structure to pre-service teachers in internships, including simultaneous teaching practice and skill development. In order to create more successful teacher education programs, this study aims to explore the variations in perspectives of student teachers in integrated and specific professional teaching courses towards internship.

Review of Related Literature

The integrated approach in teacher education courses was adopted from the United States and adapted to teacher education in India throughout the 1960s, according to previous research (Kundu, 2021). Kurukshetra University

and Sardar Patel University were the first to provide integrated courses, which were afterwards followed by Regional Colleges of Education in Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, and Mysore. NCTE announced new teacher training frameworks in 2014, including a 2-year B.Ed course to replace the 1-year B.Ed. course and a 4-year integrated courses with a focus on a combined degree including 3 years of Bachelors of Arts/ Bachelors of Science and 1-year of Bachelors of Education (Siddiqui, Sharma & Arora, 2009). By combining different subject contents with professional courses and teaching the same, integrated curriculum provides learners with additional opportunities for experiences and skill development (Furner & Kumar, 2007; Panda & Tewari, 2009; Szarek et al., 2016). According to Yadav and Ojha (2016), an integrated curriculum is a learning approach that purposefully combines and uses knowledge from several disciplines to properly investigate major issues, problems, and challenges, and encourages interrelatedness of linked disciplines to tackle different challenges. Teaching is getting more complicated, and highly qualified teachers use a variety of approaches for various goals, incorporate and integrate multiple types of information, develop different pedagogic strategies, and respond to diversity of learners in present context. One of the most essential elements influencing student learning is teachers' content mastery in their respective disciplines, as well as their ability in communicating content knowledge to their students (Hendrikse, 2013; Javanbakht, 2014). Internship courses, according to Beggs, Ross, and Goodwin (2008), provide opportunity to engage in professional practice and activities related to knowledge application. The student-teachers under training consider internship programs as a meaningful platform to develop their teaching competencies in a real school context, according to Saleha (2012).

Need of the Study

Internship in teacher education entails putting theoretical knowledge into practice through multiple and repeated experiences in order to gain practical teaching skills. Internship programs are intended to promote the student-teachers to full-fledged members of the profession. There is a growing need for a working and functional model of teacher education program which should encourage professional growth of student-teachers. The purpose of the present study is to identify and analyse the challenges of internship in a teacher training program and to devise proper solutions to tackle such challenges for further qualitative improvement.

Objectives

- To explore the perceptions of pre-service teachers towards internship as a part of professional teachers' training programs.
- To identify any significant difference in the perceptions of pre-service teachers towards internship as a part of four-year integrated (B.Sc. B.Ed., BA. B.Ed.) and two-year B.Ed. curriculum.

Hypotheses of the Study

- There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of pre-service teachers of all three courses towards internship.
- There will be no significant difference in the perceptions of pre-service teachers of four-year integrated and two-year specific courses towards internship.

Methodology

The present study followed a quantitative approach and was conducted in the Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar to study the perceptions of student-teacher trainees on internship. Two types of courses were

taken for this study i.e., 4-year integrated and 2-year specific professional courses.

Sample

The sample consisted of 250 final year pre-service teacher trainees of the Institute which includes 100 B.Sc. B.Ed., 50 B.A. B.Ed. and 100 B.Ed. pre-service teachers. The purposive sampling was used to carry out the sampling.

Tools Used

A self-developed close-ended statement-based tool was developed to collect perceptions of teacher trainees which were validated by involving internal as well as external experts. The tool consisted of 19 statements. Against each statement there were three options i.e. strongly agree, agree and disagree. Teacher trainees were asked to read the statements carefully and to put a tick mark against any one option of their choice.

Data Collection

After completion of semester examination in January, 2019 and working with the community in February, 2019 investigators interacted with final semester teacher trainees of B.Sc. B.Ed., B.A. B.Ed. and B.Ed. courses. A separate date for each group was decided and the tool was used to collect feedback of teacher trainees. Before administration of the tool, it was made clear to the teacher trainees that it was not a test nor would it be evaluated for any publication of results. This study was designed to improve the quality of the internship of the institute.

Data Analysis

After the collection of responses from the teacher trainees, the investigators prepared the code for the entire tool for the purpose of entry of data into the Excel. The spread sheets in Excel were further entered into

SPSS 20.0. The frequency and percentage were calculated followed by Mann-Whitney U test as data did not followed normal distribution for comparing the two groups.

Results and Discussion

The results of the present study clearly revealed that teacher trainees of both four-year integrated (B.Sc. B.Ed. and BA. B.Ed.) and two-year B.Ed. courses strongly agreed that internship in teacher education programs is essential for becoming an effective teacher (Figure 1). The Multicultural placement program develops confidence for facing internships and was strongly agreed by half of 4-year integrated and two-third of 2-year trainees. Most of the 4-year integrated (66.66 %) and 2-year (61.84 %) trainees agreed to the fact that the pre-internship conference is important and it helped them to understand all the activities of internship. Majority of four-year integrated and two-year trainees agreed that the internship assisted them to apply the theoretical knowledge of teaching in real school environment. Almost all the trainees from both the courses agreed to the fact that they had gained knowledge about functioning of school and functioning of teachers (Figure 2). However, quite a good number of trainees of both four-year integrated (31.77 %) and two-year course (14.47 %) disagreed that the duration of internship in a semester is not appropriate. The trainees of the four-year integrated course disagreed that 40 days is not sufficient to complete all assigned activities while trainees of the two-year course surprisingly disagreed that four months was also not sufficient. They also disagreed that the number of lessons in each pedagogy subject was adequate for developing teaching competency and facilities available in schools were adequate. Majority

of the interneers of both courses agreed to the fact that it is very much essential that cooperating teachers of schools need to understand and have clear ideas about the objectives of internship so that they can guide the trainees effectively. Most of them agreed that school cooperating teachers used to observe their class (Figure 3). However, there were differences in opinions among both the groups. The trainees from both courses mostly agreed to the appropriateness of teaching methodologies advocated by Regional Institute of Education i.e., 63 per cent and 61.84 per cent. Almost majority of the trainees agreed that the pre and post teaching discussions with the institute supervisor helped them out to solve different problems faced during internship. Peer teaching helped in improving the teaching standard—was strongly agreed by majority of the trainees of the four-year integrated and two-year B.Ed. courses. The concept mapping and lesson planning are one of the essential factors in pre-preparedness for the teaching—was agreed by most of the trainees from both the courses (Figure 4). ICT use in teaching helps in developing conceptual understanding of various topics—was strongly agreed by almost half of trainees of four-year integrated and two-year courses. Most of the trainees of four year integrated and two year courses agreed that action research helped them to improve teaching, however, some disagreed as well. Innovative teaching strategies develop only in a real classroom situation when the teacher faces the learners and understands them properly. A classroom is always heterogeneous in nature and the type of strategies which will be effective can be developed through experience—was strongly agreed by trainees of both the courses.

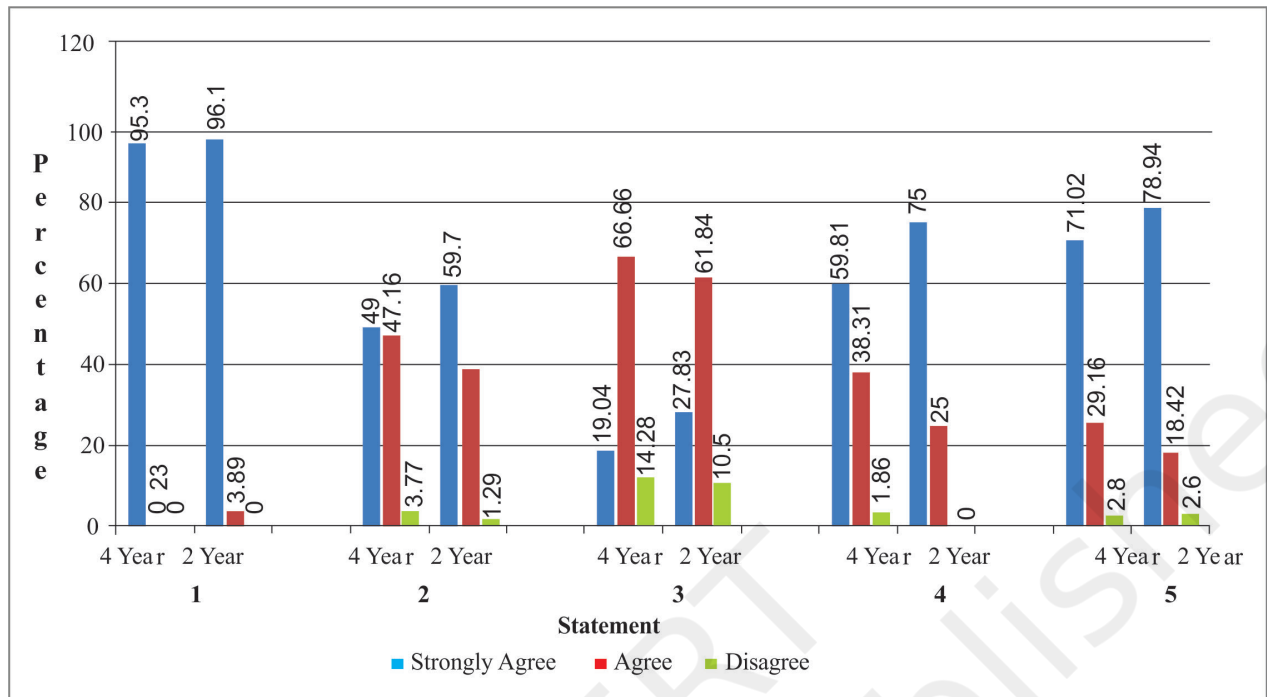


Figure 1 : Comparison of responses between four-year integrated and two-year pre-service teacher trainees for statements 1 to 5.

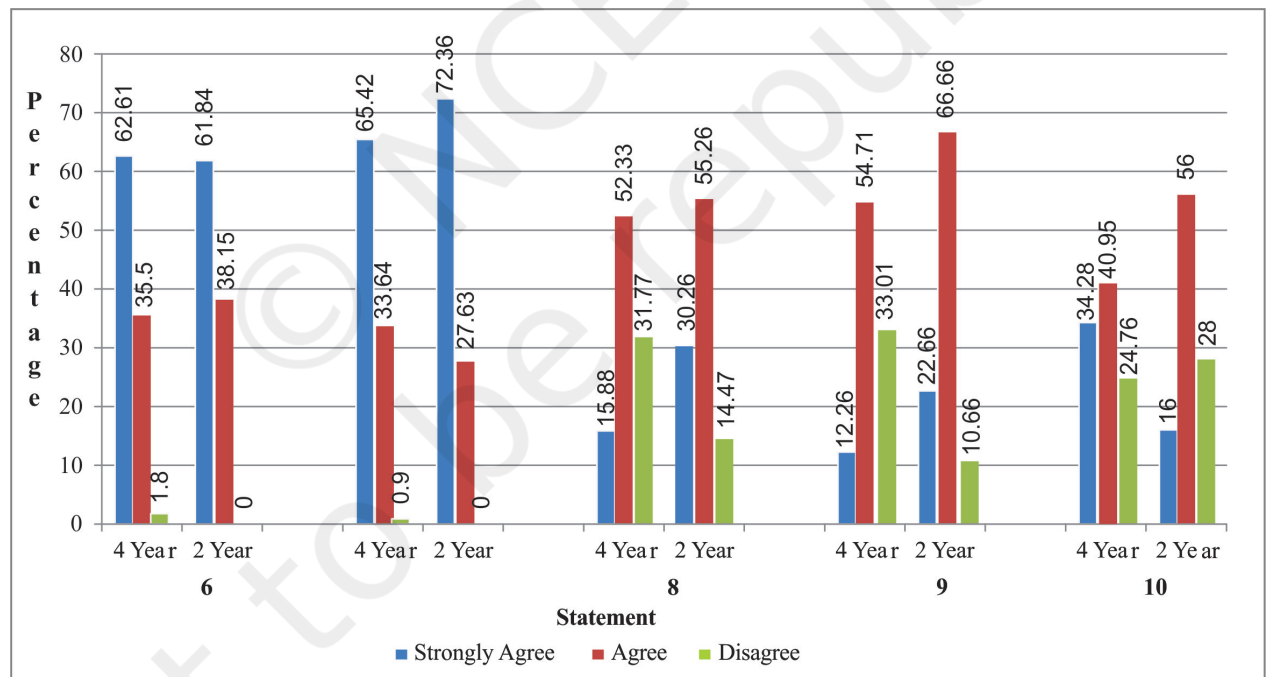


Figure 2 : Comparison of responses between four-year integrated and two-year pre-service teacher trainees for statements 6 to 10.

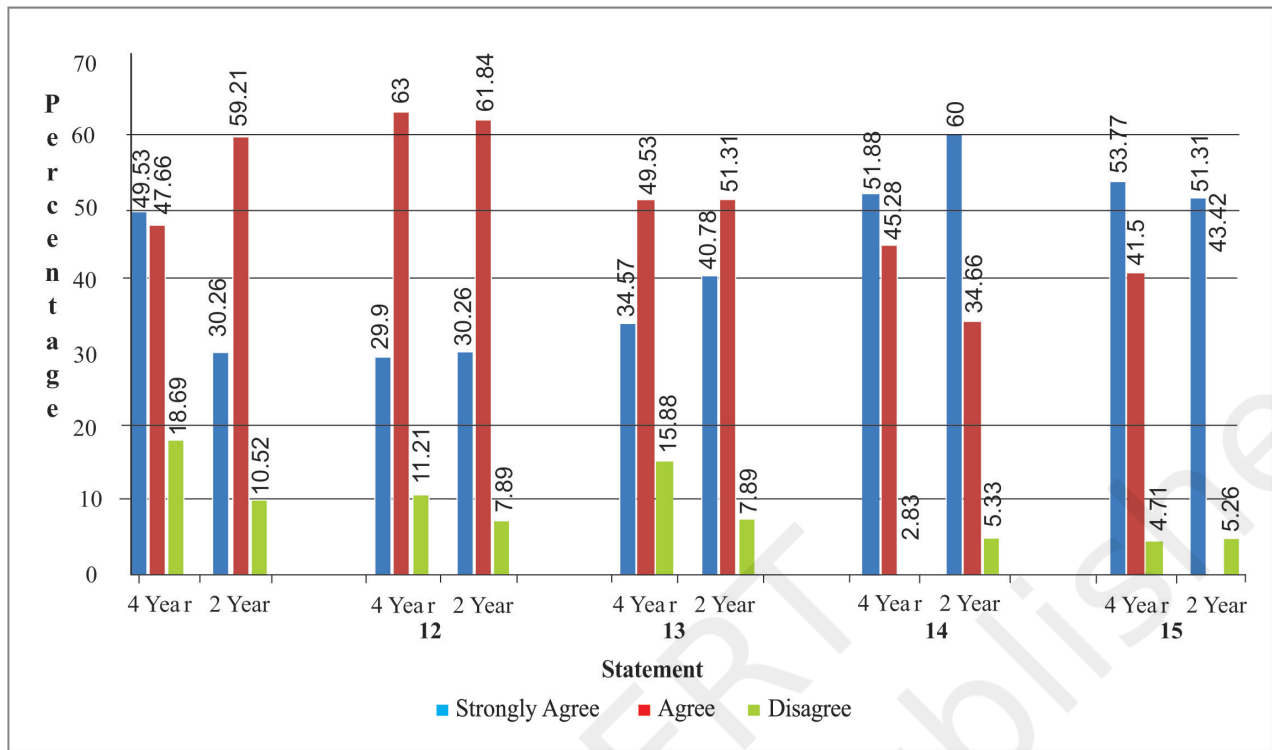


Figure 3 : Comparison of responses between four-year integrated and two-year pre-service teacher trainees for statements 11 to 15.

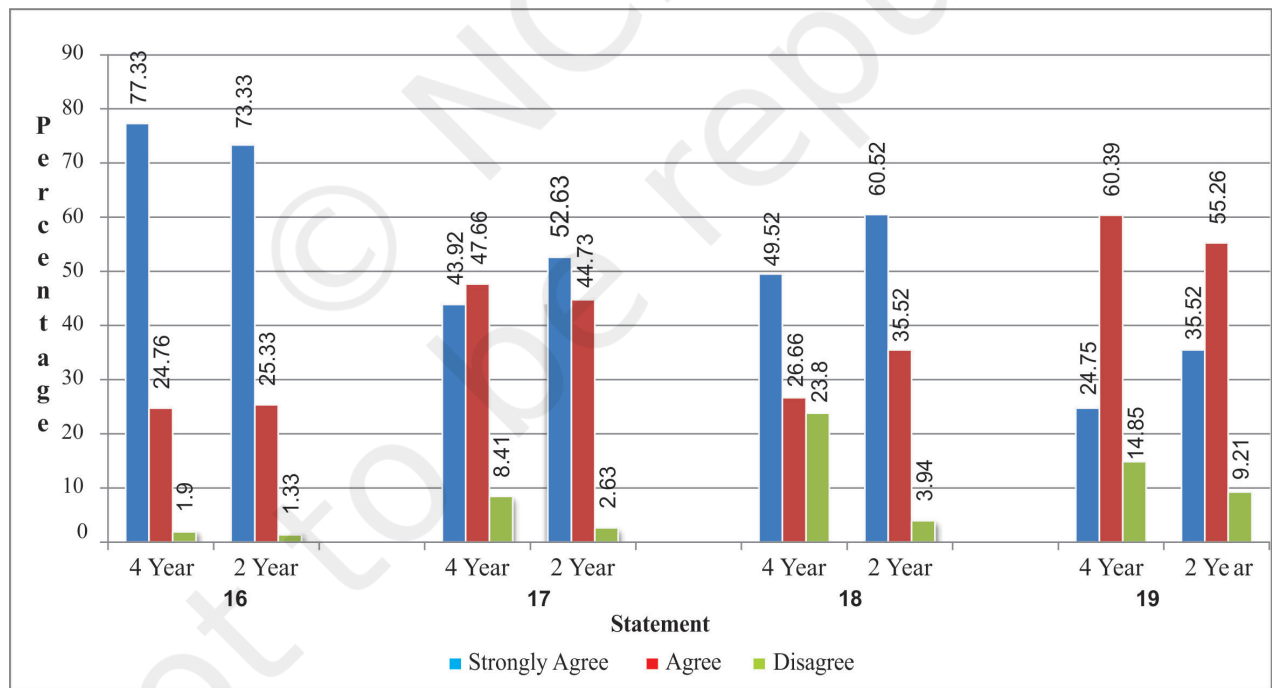


Figure 4 : Comparison of responses between four-year integrated and two-year pre-service teacher trainees for statements 16 to 19.

Further the results of Mann-Whitney U test showed statistically significant difference in the perspectives of pre-service teachers towards practice of teaching different skills during the internship ($p=0.028$; Table1). Majority of the two year specific professional teaching courses trainees (75%) strongly agreed that the internship helped them to practice different teaching skills while only 59.81 per cent of the integrated course trainees believed that it helped them out (Figure 1). This could be attributed to the fact that the duration of internship in integrated courses was very less, that is only 40 days to practice different skills. The appropriateness of the duration of the internship was also one of the factors where there were differences in the opinions ($p=0.002$). Though majority of them agreed that the duration of internship was sufficient i.e. 40 days for 4 year integrated courses and 4 months for 2 year courses. However a good number of students (31.77%) from integrated courses disagreed that the duration of internship

was appropriate. In comparison to this relative less number of students (14.47%) disagreed about the appropriateness of internship duration (Figure 2). The opinions of the pre-service trainees of the two courses in respect to the adequate number of lessons required to develop teaching competency during internship differs significantly at $p=0.001$. Integrated course trainees mostly disagreed with this fact. The results were statistically significant also with respect to adequate facilities available at the school ($p=0.05$) and whether the school cooperating teachers observe internees classes or not ($p=0.00$) (Figure 3). Further the differences observed in the perceptions of student teachers in the use of ICT in the classroom during internship differs significantly at $p=0.019$. Majority of the two year course trainees (60.52 %) strongly agreed that use of ICT helped them while only 49.52 per cent of integrated course trainees believe that ICT could be used during internship (Figure 4).

Table 1: Results of Mann-Whitney U test for differences in the perceptions of 4-Year Integrated and 2-year Teachers Training Courses

Factors/ Statements	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z
Internship Importance	4087.500	9865.500	-.254
Multi-cultural Placement .127 Importance	3610.000	9281.000	-1.524
Relevance of Pre-internship .159 Conference	3575.000	9140.000	-1.410
Practice of Different .028 Teaching Skills	3429.500	9207.500	-2.193
Practice of Theoretical 240 Knowledge	3751.000	9529.000	-1.174
Basic Understanding about .993 Functioning of School	4063.500	6989.500	-.008
Basic Understanding about .304 Functions of the Teacher	9551.000	3773.000	-1.028
Appropriateness of .002 Duration of Internship	3075.500	8853.500	-3.095

Adequate Number of .001 Lessons to Develop Teaching Competency	2918.500	8589.500	-3.468
Schools have Adequate .050 Facilities for Internship	3312.000	6162.000	-1.959
School Teachers Observe .000 Interns' Classes	2920.000	5846.000	-3.494
Appropriateness of Teaching .726 Methodologies Advocated by RIE	3958.500	9736.500	-.350
Pre & Post Teaching .184 Discussions with Supervisor	3641.000	9419.000	-1.329
Observation of Peer Teaching .381	3709.500	9380.500	-.875
Use of Teaching Aids .735	3923.500	6849.500	-.338
Use of Concept Mapping .982	3931.500	9496.500	-.023
Use of Lesson Planning .147	3610.000	9388.000	-1.451
Use of ICT .019 during Internship	3255.500	8820.500	-2.347
Relevance of Action .083 Research in Improving	3323.000	8474.000	1.733

Several research in recent decade showed that both in-service teachers who are already in job and pre-service teachers who are yet to enter into profession and are under training believe that internship is most important part of any professional teaching program (Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). The findings of our study were also in the synchronisation with the above findings. While doing internship, the student teachers have chance to develop their attitudes and skills through continuous practice. Keeping in mind how crucial the internship is in developing potential future teachers, only a handful of studies have been conducted in about internship (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002; Hawky, 1998). The findings of the present research also showed incapability of school administration, addressing students' needs, lack of use of ICT and other teaching aids to a certain extent. Panda and Nayak in 2014 also found similar results that the new teachers majorly encounters problems related to classroom management, lack of awareness about how to use aids and discipline related issues.

Implications

The following things may be taken care of for successful organisation of internship:

- The student/pre-service teachers should be provided essential basic skills before starting of the internship. The supervisors must demonstrate the lessons and provide positive feedback for better results.
- Various training sessions should also be organised for the supervisors in order to

guide the student teachers effectively.

- The feedbacks received from the student teachers should be included in further improvement in internship programs.

Conclusion

The findings of the study highlights that internship is an effective way to provide training to students who aspire to become teachers. It provides opportunities to integrate the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching. The new trainee teachers got in depth understandings about the roles

of teacher and functioning of schools. They understand different aspects of teaching. Internship provide opportunities for skill development and improvement to develop as true professional teachers.

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