



Unleashing Student's Perspectives on Novel Teacher Education Program

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Abstract: Bachelor in Education 4 years has been launched in the universities of Pakistan for the pre-service teacher training across Pakistan. This study was conducted to have the perception of students about the newly launched B.Ed 4 years program with the collaboration of the Teacher Education Project by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The enrolled students (n-40) of the B.Ed 4 year program were a sample of the study. An interview protocol was administered to have an insight into IUB students. Students' perception was taken in the form of their viewpoints right from the beginning like a reason for taking admission in this program, perception prevailing in their surrounding community about this newly launched degree and the university's role assessment in coming up to their expectations. NVIVO-11 was used for data analysis. It can be concluded that there are no doubts about the viability and marketability of the program in future..

Key Words: B.Ed. 4 years program, Perception, Self-regulation, Pedagogy, Practicum, Marketability

Introduction

Teacher education is a pivotal component of the education system of any country. The quality and effectiveness of the education system are based on the nature of teacher education programs. Appropriate planning and execution of teacher training program determine the future of the teaching and learning process (1). Moreover, the structure and foundations of teacher training programs also determine the knowledge, competency and skills of teacher educators (Ali, 2011). The failure of teacher's competencies in understanding learners needs and success is the result of ineffective teachers, training. Pakistan is a country having the largest school set up of more than 336,878 institutions, including public and private schools, in which 51.19 million children are enrolled (AEPMA, 2018). Similarly, a large number 300,000 of teachers are working in these institutions (AEPMA, 2018). There are 206 institutes for the training of teachers in the country. These institutes impart both types of trainings; pre-service and in-service education. Pre-service education is meant for the

requirement as a compulsory course to enter the teaching profession. These programs are designed to equip the teacher with the knowledge, skills and competency to teach students and take entry into employment as a qualified professional teacher (Ahmad, 2012). Initially, pre-service teachers training programs consisted of less than one year, and pre-qualification for these programs, i.e. Primary School Teaching (PTC) was matriculation and for Certificate of Teaching (CT) was intermediate (Shami & Hussain, 2006; GoP, MoE, 2004). Later on, these programs were absolute with one-year Programs, i.e. B.Ed. after 14 years of education and M.Ed. after 16 years of education. Realization with the emerging needs of 21-century teaching and learning skills, strong criticism from the practioners raised on the limited curricula and duration of these programs. During the last decade, immense development was made in the field of teacher education with the help of national and international organizations. USAID (2010) presented a report in which it highlighted

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that one-year programs for teachers training are not good enough to meet the quality and national professional standards, and these programs need transformation in terms of course contents and credit hours. Resultantly, Higher Education Commission, with the consultancy from university departments, education representatives and USAID, designed 4 years program Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.). This is an undergraduate program that is designed to prepare students as future teachers for primary and middle schools. However, some extra duties must be done in order for learners to be fully qualified to the teacher at different levels in school (Danielson, C., & McGreal, T. I., (2000) & Darling, H. L., (2004). In the Pakistani education system, a concept of 01 years B. Ed had very strong roots, which are now envisioned to be shifted to 04 years B.Ed. Currently, both 01 year and 04 years are functional; however, 04 years degree is taking its roots in the teacher education institutions at public sector colleges and universities with the collaboration of the Teacher Education Project (TEP) of USAID. In Pakistani public sector universities, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur is one of the universities offering this newly launched program under the umbrella of TEP, USAID. However, in our context, many students take this program as their major and not as a side subject just to become certified teachers (Ali, 2005).

For the study, interview questions were made covering various dimensions of the program as designed by National Accreditation

Council for Teacher Education, (NACTE) Pakistan. NACTE was established by HEC in 2006. The purpose of this council was to design standards, procedures and tools for the accreditation of teacher programs. The council not only involve faculty, content and researchers to get feedback but also considers students of the program as an important evaluator. Keeping in view this domain of evaluation, the main objective of this study is to document students perceptions about B.Ed. (Hons.) program. As this study was specifically IUB insight, that's why students of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur students Department of Educational Training comprised the sample of the study in order to analyze the prevailing perception. There were 40 students who were interviewed for study purpose. Most of the demographic statistics show that the population was female, ranging between 20 to 22 years. Most of them had previously done Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) in arts, but some were also qualified in HSSC with Science subjects. They all had teaching experience of their practicum, which was offered to them as their program requirement in the 2nd and 4th semester (Agra, 2005).

Interestingly there was not much variation in the responses provided by the students, and almost all had the same opinions on some questions. The reason for this similarity may be due to the limitation of a smaller sample size or one gender representation. The detailed responses are presented below:

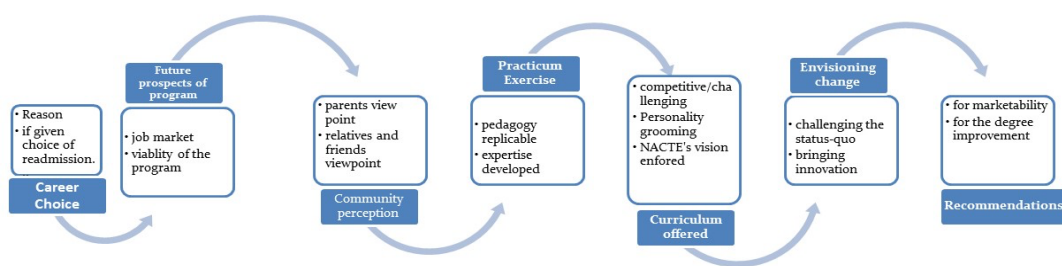


Figure 1: Mind map of Areas Explored!

Source: National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education, NACTE Pakistan

The Current Study

The study was conducted to identify the opinions of the students who have opted for the 4-year bachelor degree in the field of education at the

Islamia University of Bahawalpur. It also investigated how to contribute their role in future as professionals of this field. As supplementary

objectives, the study also documents the perception of students about the newly launched B.Ed 4 years program and to identify the worth of the B.Ed 4 years program in the perspective of nomenclature for students set by NACTE Pakistan. To achieve the research objectives, the researchers attempted to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the perception of B.Ed 4 years students about the future perspective of the program;
2. What are the specific needs and requirements of the B.Ed 4 years students?
3. What is the worth of the B.Ed 4 years program in the perspective of nomenclature for students set by NACTE in Pakistan?
4. What are the suitable strategies for the improvement of the B.Ed 4 years program in Pakistan?

Research Method

The study was conducted to have the perception of students about the newly launched 04 years B. Ed degree program. The nature of the study was descriptive, while the qualitative research approach was used to gather information from the respondents. The population of the study consisted of 40 students of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur students from 7th semester B.Ed. (Hons.) program. An interview protocol was administered to have an insight into the Islamia University of Bahawalpur students. Students' perception was taken in the form of their viewpoints right from the beginning like a reason for taking admission in this program, perception prevailing in their surrounding community about this newly launched degree and the university's role assessment in coming up to their expectations. Before every interview and discussion process, the researcher introduced himself/herself and thanked the participants for taking part in this study. A copy of the interview protocol was given to them to overview before the interview in order to build a good rapport and make them comfortable. After reading the interview protocols, the researchers asked them and taken proper consent if they agreed to process the interviews.

Analysis of the study

Responses of the study were transcript in word file by interviewee name. These word files were

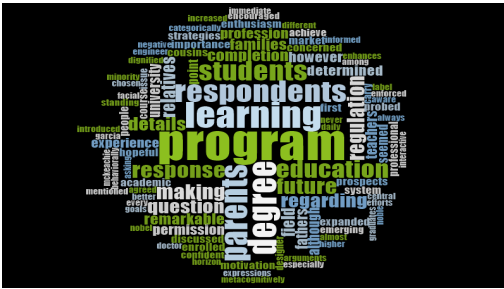
imported in NVIVO-11 for data analysis. Word frequency query was applied, and results were presented in word cloud map and word treemap.

Study Result



Word cloud map indicated that the students opted for this course because teaching is a good profession and is the most suitable for females in our society. The students were very ambitious about getting good jobs after the completion of this degree. The majority of respondents were confident that they had been trained in such a way that they can prove themselves anywhere if given the opportunity. Almost all were of the view that there is no issue or compulsion regarding job after the completion of the degree as far as their parents or immediate families are concerned. But some were doubtful regarding their family trends, and they categorically mentioned that this permission is limited to the time till they are in their parents' homes. All of them agreed on the point that the future of this program would flourish in the times to come. All the respondents seemed very determined that they will vouch for the program's marketing as they have remarkable experience in this 04-year degree. The respondents were also very much hopeful about the viability of the program in future as they will have a good job market, and resultantly, the upcoming students will prefer to get themselves enrolled in 04 years degree. Respondents were of the opinion that B.Ed 04 year program is the doorway to effective teaching as it is preparing the students in a competitive and challenging environment. They have been given practical projects and assignments because of this program; their confidence level has been raised. Some students admitted that the college system had never polished their skills, and they were very shy in presentations. They have been trained in a way as if they are assuming the actual role in the very next

semester in spite of the fact that it's an 8-semester program.



Word cloud map showed that the respondents' enthusiasm towards 4 years degree program of education. The more frequently used words are also in bold and make a cloud around the program are; degree, learning, students, response, parents, families, university, regulation. This cloud map query explored that most University system is making them responsible for their own learning and making them aware of their standing throughout the course of the semester. This program is preparing them for self-regulated learning. They discussed the program with their

parents and well informed about the academic details of the 04-year program. Their parents have shown satisfaction with the details. The perception regarding of their relatives and cousins about this degree program, very few said that their educated relatives and cousins encouraged them in this decision. Some were of the view that it took some time for relatives to realize the significance of this degree. One student wrote, "I always get a negative response from those people who are not in the field of education. During my first year of this program, I used to get hurt from the remarks and facial expressions of the people whenever I told them about my degree program. Then with the passage of time, I got confident in being a part of a very noble profession, and now I can proudly share the objectives of the program with others and can show them that it is the best profession in the world because every doctor, engineer, designer, and other professionals have got their dignified label due to the efforts of their teachers, and now we have realized that teachers are the nucleus of the entire education system, and we are the one chosen for this Nobel and sacred profession".

CPCS

education	program	response	regulation	modern	field	opinion	content	replica	engag	expect	expos	focus	goals	journe
						prevailin	bringin	think	manner	related	respects	satisfac	techni	trainee
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Word treemap revealed that the respondents were very much hopeful that the 04-year extended program will make a difference in changing the traditional school culture prevailing in Pakistani schools, and the graduates of this program will surely make a difference by making their obligatory contributions as a return to the system. The curriculum offered in 04 years degree

program is very focused on developing 21st century skills as envisioned for the teachers by NACTE. They think it aligns itself with the goals mapped out at the national level with special respect to its focus on the inclusion of modern pedagogical approaches and the reward system in educational institutes. They feel good about being taught modern techniques and fields of studies. They are

encouraged to set their own learning goals in the program, and they feel satisfied when they themselves are regulating the learning mode. The majority of respondents realized the fact that this multi-dimensional and dynamic learning is not at all possible in a 01-year B.Ed program; this ideal situation is being implemented with a very supportive factor of the extended duration of the program. They pointed out that during their practicum, they faced content-related problems, and they felt that content of elementary level might be thoroughly revised during the course work. Moreover, it was a notable suggestion that specialized degree might be offered with titles B.Ed in Science Education, or in Maths education etc. The pedagogy delivered during the practicum, prospective teachers, were of the view that their sound exposure had really influenced the pedagogical knowledge in a positive way as they adopted the new techniques and strategies which they didn't know before to teach the students. This newness convinced some teachers in an appositive manner, and they were motivated to learn from the trainees even in that very short span of time. But on the other hand, some took it negatively due to the fear of challenging the status quo of school teaching culture. All the respondents found that the pedagogy replicated in practicum classrooms was well aligned and helped the teachers as well the students to attain the pre-specified learning outcomes, and some were of the view that the outcomes were better achieved than their expectations as novice teachers/trainees.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study reports show that not only the students are aware of this degree but also, to some extent, parents and relatives know its significance and are encouraging the students. The most encouraging feature of the insight is students' level of confidence, dedication, commitment and self-regulation to the future prospects of the 04-year B.Ed degree program. The scope of self-regulation has been expanded to studies in education areas (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1993). Self-regulated learning refers to the degree to which students motivationally, metacognitive, and behaviorally participates in their own learning, and the studies have proved that self-regulation enhances students learning. (Zimmerman, 1989). So in a way, this is a strategy they are learning and side by side experiencing as

a resource for their future. However, a lot is required to be done to bring this program at par with the other well-marketed programs because many respondents reported a weak perception of the program among the general public, especially those families in which children are pursuing education, but no family member is in higher education setup. However, the students depicted no impression of any regret on their choice of this lengthy program even though the alternate shorter duration was very much available with less cost and time duration features (Agra, 2005). The respondents showed their involvement and satisfaction with the program curriculum, mode of study and future marketability of the program. The respondents are hopeful that this 04-year degree will help them in getting better jobs in the educational sector. Their passion was far more than a student of a leading business school having attractive offers from well-reputed organizations. It seems that the 04-year program has patched up to deficiency and shortcomings of shorter duration, and a bit debatable 01-year B.Ed. However, the results are leading towards envisioning the initiation of a teaching license at the national level as a mandatory requirement for being a teacher at any level. The data collected from the beneficiaries/students also yielded some valuable suggestions to improve the program in successive batches at IUB.

Recommendations

The recommendations are as follows:

1. Seminars may be conducted on multiple topics in which success stories of educationists may be shared with prospective teachers.
2. Collaboration with other teacher education institutions may be made, and students may be exposed to different current practices through these institutions.
3. Practicum duration may be increased with respect to no. of days in a week.
4. During the practicum, management-related training may also be given side by side teaching so that if anybody is interested in pursuing a management position, she may have relevant experience in that field as well.
5. More emphasis should be given to the research component both with respect to theory and practice. Now students are offered only research project at the end of the course.

The degree is equivalent to Masters, and graduates are eligible for MPhil, but without doing a thesis 04-year degree program, graduates won't be the first choice of well-reputed institutions for higher studies.

6. General courses may be included like globalization, tourism, knowledge management, peace education, political education etc., for broadening students' horizon.
7. Practicum in private organizations may also be offered.
8. Specialization in Elementary subjects may be offered so that students can better decide upon their future studies.

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