

An In-depth Analysis of Peers and Mentors' Feedback during Teaching Practicum

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Abstract

It is very essential to provide quality and effective feedback to the prospective teachers during practicum to provide information about their teaching strengths and weaknesses. Provision of feedback helps them to remove their mistakes and improve their teaching practice. The aim of this study was to examine the role of peer's and mentor's feedback on the performance of prospective teachers during practicum. 6 prospective teachers and 3 mentors were interviewed by the researcher. The whole data

Key Words

Teaching, Practicum,
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was collected from 3 public universities of Lahore city. Findings of this study revealed that peer's and mentor's feedback plays an important role in their learning and professional development during practicum. This study suggests that universities should conduct some training programs, seminar and workshops for prospective teachers and their mentors to provide awareness about the role of peer's and mentor's. .

Introduction

Feedback is defined by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary as “a helpful information or criticism that is given to someone to say what can be done to improve a performance, product, etc.” Nicol (2010) emphasized that the way of analyzing, discussing and acting upon feedback by the learners is very important just as the quality of the feedback. It highlights that an effective feedback should be actionable and qualitative.

Teaching practicum is a highly complex procedure in which number of difficulties are involved but important for the learning and professional development of prospective teachers (Velez, 2003; Gan, 2013). Ferrier-Kerr (2009) describes the teaching practicum experience as the most effective and influential aspect of the pre-service teacher education. According to Farrell (2007) experience of practicum is crucial for the professional preparation of prospective teachers. In the opinion of Hascher, Cocard&Moser (2004), teaching practicum determines the future of prospective teachers in the teaching profession by providing information about the success and failure of their teaching practice.

Mentors play a vital role in the professional development of prospective teachers during teaching practicum. According to Bonilla and Méndez Rivera (2008) mentoring provide support to the prospective teachers to improve their teaching actions through dialoguing and giving advice. In the view of Hattie (2008) the reason behind the supervision of teaching practicum is providing information about the performance of prospective teachers i.e. provision of feedback which take them towards progress.

It is emphasized in the studies (Shin, Wilkins, & Ainsworth, 2006; Wynn & Kromrey, 2000) that the use of peer feedback practices is a way to enhance the professional growth of prospective teachers through immediate feedback.

Numbers of factors are involved in the professional development of prospective teachers, one being the ability of teachers to be reflective on the feedback provided by mentors during their practice. Provision of adequate, consistent and accurate feedback by the peer and mentor remains advantageous for the development of professional competence in prospective teachers. Brandt (2008) suggests that it is important for trainees to being aware that they are receiving good quality feedback if the purpose behind the provision of feedback is to provide information about their performance for the sake of betterment of their practice.

A study done by Naylor, Campbell-Evans and Maloney (2015) emphasized that attitudes, beliefs and approaches of prospective teachers about their teaching experience has influenced greatly their teaching vision and the things they learnt during their teaching practicum.

According to the studies of (Smith, 2007) provision of feedback plays an important role in the teacher education programs as It has great influence on the student teachers' performance and providing them with ways of teaching. Feedback provides opportunity of reflection and self-assessment to the prospective teachers about their teaching practicum and helps them to make their practicum successful.

Statement of the Problem

The Study is an in depth analysis of mentors and peers' Feedback during Teaching Practicum. In this study the researcher will put her efforts to find out the importance of feedback provided by peer and mentors towards student teachers during their teaching practice and what student teachers think about it.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

- Recognize the importance of feedback during teaching practicum
- analyze the effects of mentors' feedback on prospective teachers performance
- Investigate the effects of peers' feedback on prospective teachers performance

Research Questions of the Study

After conducting this study, the researcher will be able to find out the answers of the following questions:

1. What is the role and importance of provision of feedback during teaching practicum?
2. What are the effects of mentors' feedback on the learning of prospective teachers during practicum?
3. What are the effects of peers' feedback on the learning of prospective teachers during practicum?

Research Design

In this study, the researcher tried to find out the role of feedback provided by the peer and mentors during teaching practicum whether it is effective for prospective teachers or not. To fulfill the purpose qualitative research method was used.

Population and Sampling

Students studying in teacher education programs of public universities in Lahore and their teaching practicum mentors were the population of this study.

The researcher selected 6 prospective teachers and 3 mentors to conduct interview. Sample was selected by using purposive sampling approach. In qualitative research purposive sampling is most widely used technique because it provides particular and experienced participants for the study.

Interview Protocol

With the help of related literature, interview protocol was developed by the researcher and validated by the panel of experts.

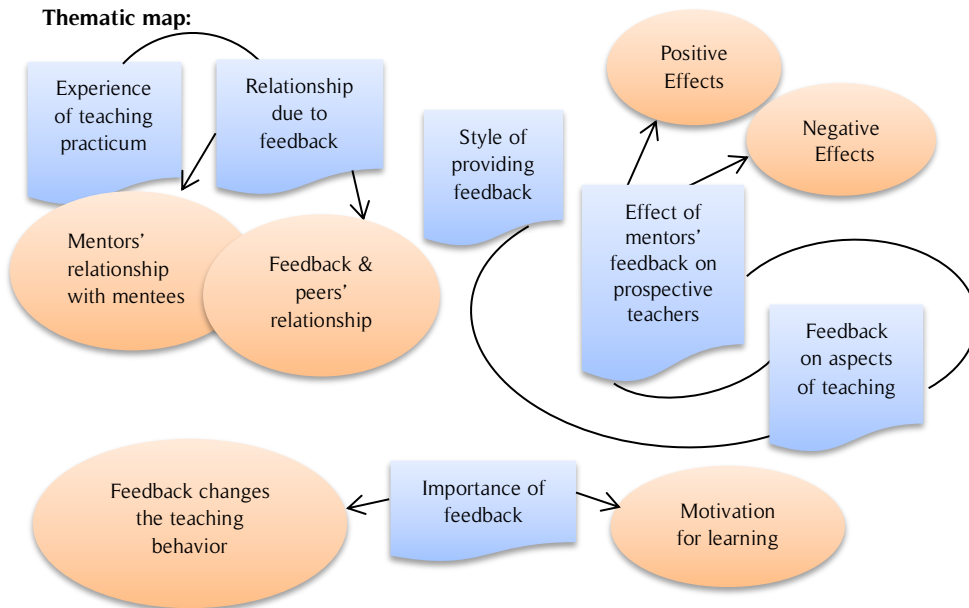
Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was done by the researcher to find out what prospective teachers reflect about the feedback provided by their peer and mentors during their teaching practicum. In the opinion of Marks and Yardley 2004, it provides an opportunity to understand the potential of the problem under discussion in great detail.

Table 1. Final themes

Theme: Experience of Teaching Practicum	Theme: Style of Providing Feedback	Theme: Feedback on Aspects of Teaching
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<p>Good experience, Good coordination with students, Feeling very comfortable, Provides opportunities to mold students as effective student teachers, Provides opportunities to observe and guide students.</p>	<p>Oral feedback during observation of lecture, Written feedback while checking of lesson plans, Point out their mistakes on notebooks, Writing remarks on their notebooks, Electronic feedback through whatsapp group.</p>	<p>Communication skills, Demonstration skills, Management skills, Body language (eye contact, voice tone, code of conduct, dressing code, etc.) Command on content, Use of appropriate teaching methodology, Proper use of activities.</p>
<p>Theme: Relationship due to Feedback</p>	<p>Theme: Effect of Mentors' Feedback on Prospective Teachers</p>	<p>Theme: Importance of feedback</p>
<p>Sub theme: Mentors' relationship with mentees Friendly relationship, No restrictions, Students can discuss their problems anytime, Students can learn easily in friendly environment, Treat students friendly while observing their performance, Treat students strictly while checking of lesson plans.</p> <p>Sub theme: Feedback and peers' relationship Providing feedback to each other, Discuss their problems with each other, Very supportive for each other, Give respect to each other, Peer feedback exists in micro teaching not in practicum, Informally they provide feedback to each other, They learn better by observing each other's performance.</p>	<p>Positive effect, Taking feedback seriously, Depends on the way of providing feedback, Tell their strong points first rather than weak points, Some students take it negatively,</p> <p>Sub theme: Positive effects Improve learning, Provide awareness about professional deficiencies, Students can learn to manage the class, Students can learn how to prepare and deliver the lecture, Students can evaluate themselves, Students become punctual, Raise their confidence level, Develop their critical thinking.</p> <p>Sub theme: Negative effects Some students thought that mentors highlight their mistakes, Students become demotivated if they take it as criticism, Heart students' ego and self-esteem, Some students don't take it seriously, Some students become careless.</p>	<p>Very important, Very helpful and effective, Serves as the criteria on which students can know about their progress, Students become aware about their mistakes, Important to enhance their quality of teaching.</p> <p>Sub theme: Motivation for learning Definitely motivated, Try to improve their mistakes, Encourage for learning.</p> <p>Sub theme: Feedback changes the teaching behavior Students can learn and improve their mistakes, Students become able to strengthening their teaching skills, Good for improvement</p>



Researcher transcribed the mentors' interviews based on 11 open ended statements from which 6 Themes were originated and 3 of them have sub themes. These themes and sub themes are described below:

Experience of Teaching Practicum

All mentors show very positive attitude and were agree that their experience was very good. One mentor described in which he takes the teaching practicum and deal with prospective teachers:

The experience is very good. I take it as an opportunity to mold these students as effective prospective teachers through regular observation of their performance and provision of adequate guidance and feedback according to situation. (Mentor 1)

One mentor shared her experience and described how long she provides services for teaching practicum:

Very good experience, I provide services for teaching practicum from 5 years. I try to maintain good coordination between me and my mentees. I felt very good by providing guidance to my students about the problems they face during practicum. (Mentor 3)

One mentor said that she feels comfortable in providing feedback to the prospective teachers after spending some time with them and understanding their style of teaching.

I have very good experience. Specially after spending 1 or 2 weeks with these students I feel very comfortable in providing feedback to them on their skills. (Mentor 2)

Style of Providing Feedback

Mostly mentors provide oral/verbal feedback during observation of prospective teachers' performance in lecture delivery and written/non-verbal feedback while checking of their lesson plans which they write for lecture. Mentor 1 mostly focused on providing feedback to prospective teachers on their teaching skills e.g. communication and management skills.

When I make observation of their lecture in the classroom, I simply point out their deficiencies in their communication skills, provide them guidance how to deal with students and manage the classroom. (Mentor 1)

Other mentors were providing feedback in the same way but mentor 2 shared that she also provides electronic feedback to the prospective teachers under her supervision. (Mentor 2)

Feedback on Aspects of Teaching

All mentors were agreed that during practicum mostly they provide feedback to the prospective teachers on their body language, communication skills, appropriate use of Audio Visual aids and management skills.

Mentor 3 shared the criteria about teaching aspects which they set to provide feedback to their mentees:

We have criteria on which we check the abilities of prospective teachers during practicum. It includes dressing code, code of conduct, voice tone and accent, their command on topic they teach, appropriate use of activities. (Mentor 3)

Effect of Mentors' Feedback on Prospective Teachers

All mentors described that provision of feedback plays an effective role for the improvement of prospective teachers during practicum. Mentors felt that most of the time positive effects occurred in the performance of prospective teachers with the provision of feedback during practicum.

One mentor described the advantages of mentors' feedback that it is proved helpful in professional development of prospective teachers and they learn to improve their teachings skills:

There are many positive aspects of providing feedback to the prospective teachers. They can learn how to manage the class, how to prepare the lecture, how to deliver the lecture. They can evaluate them self also they become punctual. (Mentor 1)

One mentor described that how much mentors' feedback is advantageous for prospective teachers and which positive effects feedback puts on their performance:

In my opinion provision of feedback motivates learning among prospective teachers, develop their critical thinking about their performance and increase their confidence level. (Mentor 2)

Importance of Feedback

Mentors were very confident about the importance of feedback during practicum for the progress and better learning of prospective teachers.

Mentors acknowledged that feedback plays an important role for the prospective teachers during practicum.

Feedback is very important to enhance the quality, confidence and motivation level of prospective teachers. (Mentor 3)

Motivation for Learning

All mentors acknowledged that through the provision of feedback prospective teachers become motivated to learn from this experience and try to work hard to improve their mistakes.

Yes, they become motivated through the feedback provided by me and try to improve their performance more than before. (Mentor 2)

Feedback Changes the Teaching Behavior

All mentors were very confident that during teaching practicum, through the provision of appropriate feedback many positive changes occur in the teaching behavior of prospective teachers.

Yes, provision of feedback plays a very important to change the teaching behavior of prospective teacher. (Mentor 2)

One mentor described how feedback is important to change the teaching behavior of prospective teachers:

Feedback is very helpful and effective to change the teaching behavior of a prospective teacher because it is the only criteria through which prospective teachers can able to understand their position where they are standing i.e. how much they achieve and how much they needed to improve. (Mentor 3)

Findings of Thematic Analysis of Prospective teachers' Interviews

Researcher transcribed the peers' interviews based on 11 open ended statements from which 7 Themes were originated and 5 of them have sub themes. These themes and sub themes are described below:

Experience of Teaching Practicum

All prospective teachers who participated in this research for qualitative data collection were very satisfied and with their experience of teaching practicum. Only one participant gave confused answer and did not provide the reason behind it:

My experience was good. I learn from that but sometimes I felt injustice with me. (Participant 6)

Preparation as Future Teacher

Participants described that they take experience of teaching practicum as the preparation for a successful future teacher. One participant described why teaching practicum is essential for their future teaching:

My experience is very good. Teaching practicum should be offered because the basic purpose of our degree is to prepare a successful teacher having professional attitude.
(Participant 2)

Learning Process

All participants were agreed that teaching practice is complete learning process and they learn positive things during practicum. One participant described that in which way prospective teachers learn during teaching practicum.

Teaching practicum is a very diverse field. A lot of things we can learn from it. (Participant 4)

Effects of Feedback on Prospective Teachers

All participants acknowledged that provision of adequate and accurate feedback remains very effective for their progress and professional development during practicum.

Effect of Mentors' Feedback

Most of the participants acknowledged that mentors' feedback puts very positive effects on their performance.

At start I feel discouraged when my mentor provides feedback to me on my mistakes but gradually I understand that he was right, it was my mistake and I have to mentors' feedback puts positive effect on my performance.
(Participant 1)

Other participant described why mentors' feedback remains effective for her and what her perception about feedback was:

Feedback provided by my mentor is very effective for me. I always take it positively because I am here to learn and I try to improve my mistakes. I believe that feedback provided by mentor is very beneficial for me.
(Participant 2)

Another participant acknowledged the effectiveness of feedback and described why provision of feedback is necessary during practicum:

Yes, mentors' feedback is very effective for me. According to me, we never know our strengths and weaknesses until we don't receive feedback by mentor. (Participant 3)

Effect of Peers' Feedback

Interestingly results were very different about the effectiveness of peers' feedback in comparison to the effectiveness of mentors' feedback. Most of the participants show negative response towards peers' feedback during practicum.

I don't feel comfortable when my peers provide feedback to me. (Participant 1)

Another participant described her experience about peers' feedback:

During practicum I felt that peers discourage me so I didn't asked and shared anything with my peers
(Participant 4)

One participant showed very mixed response and described generally why prospective teachers take peers' feedback negatively:

Sometimes I feel bad that why peer point out my mistakes, but very soon I realize that they do so because they felt my weakness. I feel good and satisfactory to discuss my problems with them. (Participant 2)

Feedback Motivates To Learn

All participants acknowledged that during practicum feedback plays an important role to motivate student teachers to learn from their mistakes and try their best to improve them. Again, responses of prospective teachers were different in respect of mentors' and peers' feedback.

Feedback motivated me to take further steps towards improved learning. (Participant 3)

Another participant acknowledged it and answered very confidently:

Exactly motivated because I find positive improvements in my performance due to mentors' feedback, it motivates me to work. (Participant 4)

One participant described how she becomes motivated through mentors' feedback:

During practicum feedback provided by mentor motivates me to improve my performance. Demonization occurs when mentor point out my mistakes but gradually I realize that it is good for me. (Participant 6)

Mentors' Feedback on Teaching Skills

During practicum mentors' feedback plays an important role to nourish the skills of prospective teachers for their professional development. All participants acknowledged that their mentors' provide adequate, accurate and consistent feedback about all these teaching skills. One participant described that on which aspects her mentor provides feedback to her:

My mentor focuses on my overall performance. Mostly he provides feedback to me on the proper use of Audio Visual aids because I become confused in its use during demonstration. (Participant 1)

One participant described that she received feedback about many things but especially her fast speaking during lecture:

My mentor provided feedback about the teaching methodologies I used during practicum. She provided feedback about my communication skills, management skills and especially pointed out that you speak very fast during lecture delivery. (Participant 4)

Another participant described that her mentor provided feedback about her different teaching skills especially her body language:

Mostly my mentor provided feedback about the proper use of A-V aids, presentation of lecture, whether I judged the previous knowledge of students before starting the lecture or not. (Participant 5)

Nature of Peers' Feedback

Again participants expressed confused and mixed responses. They described that mostly their peers' provide unnecessary, unreal and dishonest feedback whereas; sometimes they provide genuine feedback to them. One participant described that her peers make criticism unnecessarily:

Some peers make unnecessary and dishonest feedback on the poor performance due to friendship because they don't want to dishearten their friends. (Participant 3)

Another participant acknowledged that her peers' feedback was not always genuine:

Mostly I received genuine, honest and fair response towards my peers. Sometimes they had provided feedback about my strengths and sometimes on my weaknesses. (Participant 5)

Type of Feedback Prospective Teachers Received

All participants described that their mentors provide both verbal and non-verbal feedback to them during practicum. One participant explained it very clearly and precisely how mentor provides feedback to her:

My mentor provides oral feedback and points out my strengths or weaknesses after observing my lecture. (Participant 1)

Type of Feedback Prospective Teachers Wants

Some participants acknowledged that they want verbal feedback by their mentor while some acknowledged that they prefer written feedback most. One participant explained why she doesn't like written feedback and prefers verbal feedback:

Feedback should be oral and accurate. I don't like when mentor marks out mistakes with red pen on my notebook while checking of lesson plan because it gives bad impression of my notebook. (Participant 1)

One participant described why she prefers written feedback by mentor:

I prefer written feedback because whenever I see it, it reminds me the mistakes pointed out by my mentor and help me to avoid these mistakes for next time. (Participant 2)

One participant described how feedback should be provided and which type of feedback she prefers most by illustrating the importance of feedback:

Feedback should be genuine, sequential and organized. Mentor should discuss the positive things firstly then point out mistakes of prospective teachers' performance. For me provision of feedback is essential up to the type of feedback. (Participant 3)

One participant described how feedback should be and which type of feedback she prefers most:

Feedback should not be discouraging for prospective teachers. Both verbal and non-verbal feedback should be provided but written feedback is much better for me. (Participant 4)

Role of Feedback

All participants acknowledged the important role of feedback for the improvement of their teaching performance during practicum. One participant described that how feedback plays an important role during practicum:

Feedback plays very important role during practicum because if we don't get feedback during practicum then how could we know about our mistakes and weaknesses about our teaching performance. (Participant 2)

Another participant acknowledged the important role of feedback during practicum:

Feedback is the only phenomenon which tells us what and how to do otherwise we can't make focus and improve our learning during practicum. (Participant 6)

Important To Change Teaching Behavior

All participants of this study were agreed that their teaching behavior is improved after the provision of adequate and consistent feedback during practicum. One participant described that what she learned through the provision of feedback:

During practicum with the provision of feedback many changes occurred in my teaching behavior. (Participant 3)

Another participant acknowledged that her teaching behavior was improved very much through the provision of feedback:

With the provision of feedback I have been learned that how to represent myself as a teacher in front of class, how to deal with students if they don't understand any point from lecture, how to manage the situations occurred in the classroom. (Participant 4)

Feedback should be or not

All participants of this study agreed that feedback should be provided during teaching practicum. It should be the essential part of practicum because it has been proved very effective for their progress as a teacher.

Provision of feedback is very essential during practicum because without it we can't become aware how much we improved or how much needed to improve. (Participant 1)

One participant described how feedback should provide

Feedback must be provided during practicum but it should be positive. Mentor should focus on prospective teachers' strengths and weaknesses both. (Participant 5)

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted to analyze in depth role of feedback provided by peers and mentors during practicum. During practicum provision of feedback makes learning of prospective teachers very effective. It is supported by the previous study such as Laurillard (2002) highlighted the set principle of an effective practice that action without feedback proves ineffective and useless for a learner.

Feedback is very helpful for prospective teachers in the sense to remove their mistakes during teaching practice. It is acknowledged in the literature as said by Mukeredzi (2017) it is appreciated by mentors and students that provision of feedback and observations of lessons serves as a major source of knowledge in teaching. Students declared that to side with the right and locate the wrong it is necessary to provide honest and objective feedback to them. Most of the prospective teachers participated in this research were agreed that during practicum through feedback they had become aware about their mistakes and tried to remove their mistakes.

Appropriate feedback allows prospective teachers to view things from different perspectives. It is determined from this research that feedback helps to remove the gap between prospective teachers' actual and desired performance during practicum. Provision of feedback makes prospective teachers' teaching practice successful because they learn from it for their future practice.

Through feedback prospective teachers can improve their instructional skills during teaching practice. These results were supported by Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2010) feedback serves as an important element for the development of professional, personal, and procedural skills of prospective teachers.

Recommendations

Some recommendations are given below on the basis of the results of this study:

- Training programs and seminars should also be arranged for prospective teachers to guide them how to get the feedback provided by peers.
- In future, researchers should focus on the importance of peer's feedback during practicum while conducting research in the area of practicum.
- The study was conducted in qualitative paradigm in future quantitative study should be designed to investigate the larger sample on this topic of research.

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