

Practicum Obstacles at Najran University “Students’ Teachers Perspectives”

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating practicum difficulties at Najran University (NU) from students' teachers perspective. Results showed that most serious obstacles in practicum courses in the five domains, according to their importance, were as follows; collaborative school, school principal, cooperative teacher, educational supervisor and preparation program procedures. Results also showed statistically significant differences in all obstacles domains due to student's major and in favor of scientific majors, but not to training school type. The study also suggested some recommendation including the need for continuous development of practicum program, holding workshops for students during training as well as coordinating with different interested parties.

Keywords: practicum, obstacles, Najran University, students' teachers, educational supervisor.

1. Introduction

Education is an important tool for the achievement of progress in a changing world, and a major element in national development process (UNESCO, 2005). However effective education has certain prerequisites of which the teacher is the most important, for the educational process cannot realize its objectives without a teacher with scientific and professional preparation and a high level of competency that enables him to perform the roles imposed on him as an educator, guide and leader.

Teaching professions occupies the fourth position among demanding profession requiring abilities, information's and training, according to Flanagan classification of professions (Abdehadi& Al-Ezzeh, 2012). Therefore it is important to take care of teachers preparation and development programs, specially pre-service teacher education program (PTEP), the most salient of which is the practicum (Maphosa, shumba & sieborger, 2005); as it is the first opportunity for preparing teacher for teaching status and providing them with clear understanding of educational contexts by providing students with real opportunity to employ knowledge, information, and theories acquired through their study journey (National Institute of Education, 2013; Kennedy, 2006).

It is also a real practice of teaching process through which students are allowed to investigate current work environment conditions, and explore internal and external factors affecting organizational structure characteristics, school planning activities effects on and assessment (Ground water & Smith, 1996).

Practicum is the focus of all world country interest for its influence on the development of skills, and behaviors of students teachers, where several studies demonstrated its major role in bridging the gap between theory and practice, provides a framework for the acquisition and development of students educational and personal competencies (Smith and levari, 2005: 291). It also provides them with and develops their knowledge in teaching and profession including, people knowledge, self-knowledge and self-control (Eraut, 1988, cited in yan& He, 2010); and teach students teachers life skills as independence in problem solving, group work with colleagues teachers and employees, developing attitudes towards profession students and career values (Ramsden, 1992), in addition to that practicum assist students in understanding social, cultural, political and economic factors on which education is based, and it allows students to discover their capabilities and creativities which help them in teaching in the future (Tuli& File, 2009).

Unfortunately, despite being a vital element in teacher education, practicum is still a subject of arguing among scholars and educators and it occupies a large space in educational literature (schults, 2005), due to problems and challenges and obstacles facing students, during application despite their benefits in developing several teaching skill (Hamaidi, Al-shara, Abu Awwad, 2014). Vick (2006) pointed out that new attitudes should focus on students teachers training related problems.

Saudi Arabia, as other countries, was interested in teachers' preparation programs, where national – international committee concerned in education in the 21st century, report, and emphasized the need for continuous teachers' qualification (Ministry of Al-Ma'aref, 2000). Knowing that teacher colleges are the umbrella that prepare pre service teacher in various majors, this study come to throw light on the most important stage in pre service teachers preparation in education colleges which is the practicum training, and due to researcher experience in this area, as an educational supervisor in practicum, she felt the existence of difficulties and obstacles facing practicum students (students' teachers) during the practical application at schools, where multiplicity of and interfering roles of members participating in practicum, and the multiple events to which

students teachers are exposed to in and out the classroom, and which might be a result of different reasons, it is necessary that we take care and attend to this program, and as the student teacher is concerned with practicum, his point of view is determinant of practicum program. Therefore this study came to find out obstacles facing practicum students of Najran University from students teachers perspectives, to help students firstly and concerned parties to understand students' needs to improve practicum concept and raising program level, as well as presenting suggestions and recommendation for the development of practicum program, so the study main question is what are the practicum program obstacles at Najran University from students teachers perspectives? Specifically the study attempted answering the following research questions:

- What are practicum obstacles form students' teachers perspectives?
- Is there any relationship between students teachers perspectives a practicum obstacles and the following variable; Major, Type of application school?

2. Literature review

Farrell (2008) study showed that among the most important factors affecting students teachers practicum experience in the cooperation of teacher and peers who spend most of their time with students teachers.

Furthermore, org, ros, Azlian and Shamti (2004) study reported that students teachers are in high level of pressure during their practicum training which hindering positive participation in educational process as well as other several issues that cause impairment in practicum as tension, supervision and administrative work load.

Manzer – Abbas & lv (2013) analysis of preservice teacher education program, at (10) Chinese university, showed three common issues hindering the program: practicum is a very short time period, inappropriate time to transfer students teachers to the field, and out dated methods of carrying out practicum training.

Josoh (2011) study at Malaysia demonstrated that students faced several challenges some of which are personal and related to students themselves, others are related to education mean.

while shaheen (2010) study which reported problem during field training related to academic supervisor, cooperative school, cooperative school students and the faced mathematics and Arabic language majoring students as compared to other majors.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research population and Sample

Research population consisted of all eighth level female students at education college/ science and art faculty attending practicum training during the spring semester for the academic year 1435/ 1436 H. totaling for (180) female students. As for the study sample it comprises 30% of its population totaling for (71) randomly chosen from various academic majors.

3.2 Methodology and instruments

Descriptive analytical approach, based of studying the phenomenon as it is for a large sample of the population, was employed in this study. Data was collected using a questionnaire developed according to likert five point scale, including five themes: practicum program procedures, educational supervisory cooperating teacher, school principal, and cooperating school, and these themes were chosen after reviewing educational literature and exploring practicum program student's opinions. Content validity was established by submitting the instrument to a group of experts and educators, referees, is science and mathematics and to experts in Measurement and evaluation, and based on their opinions' and comments some items were removed, and others were modified. As for the instrument reliability internal consistency coefficient was computed on an exploratory sample of (70) student not participating in the study, where Cronbach alpha was (0.88) which is suitable for this study.

3.3 Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed statistically by using computerized program called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Mains, standard deviations, and T-test was calculated to detect obstacles, and arrange them in order of importance and indicate its relationship with some demographic variables.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results related to the first question

What are the practicum program obstacles from students' teachers perspective according to their importance? Means and standard deviations of practicum obstacles as seen by students' teacher, were used in answering this questions and table 1. displayed these results.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of practicum obstacles from students' teachers perspective in a descending order

Domain	Rank	Mean	Standard Deviation
Practicum program procedures	1	2.67	0.358
Educational supervisor	2	2.60	0.265
Cooperating teacher	3	2.31	0.466
School principal	4	2.28	0.420
Cooperating school	5	2.11	0.319
Total Score		2.44	0.244

Table 1. showed that practicum program procedures was ranked first with the highest mean (2.67) and SD (0.358), while cooperating school was ranked lastly with mean of (2.11) and SD (0.319), so means and standard deviation of sample responses on the items of each domain were computed, and these means and standard deviations are displayed in table 2.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of items receiving lowest rating in each domain in a descending order

Domain	Statement	Mean	SD	Degree
Program preparing procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program provides electronic communication skills 	2.46	0.651	medium
Educational Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisors interferes during the lesson Supervisor is influenced by opinion of those around him in his evaluation. 	2.32 2.21	0.841 0.754	medium medium
Cooperating teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperating teacher interferes in the lesson directly. Cooperating teachers exploit the existence of trainee student in all what's he ought to do Shows disinterest in student teachers and their capabilities. 	2.15 2.15 2.08	0.839 0.822 0.770	medium medium medium
School principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rarely follow up of students' teacher in the classroom. Gives him over load work. 	2.14 2.10	0.743 0.881	medium medium
Cooperating school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large numbers of practicum students in the school disperse cooperating teacher's efforts. Provides advanced educational technologies. Large numbers of per classroom hinders order maintenance. Practicum teacher prefers teaching in the middle stage over secondary stage. 	2.10 2.07 1.86 1.73	0.700 0.816 0.743 0.844	medium medium low low

Table 2. showed that item occupying the last rank and lowest means which represent an obstacle facing practicum students were: Teaching in a secondary school; large numbers of students per classroom, unavailability of advanced educational technologies, and large numbers of practicum students from the same major at the cooperating school, principal charging student teacher with over loaded work. Rarity of following up student teacher inside the classroom, distrust in student teacher by cooperating teacher, and exploiting her for exciting all her school deities and interfering directly in the lesson course, educational supervisors is influence, in his evaluation, by opinions of those around his and his interference in the lesson course, and poor electronic communication skills with those in charge of the program. It can be noticed that obstacles suffered by student teachers are all related to the field (cooperating school, school principal, and cooperating teachers) and this might be due to the non-considering of application school during students distribution, and the principal not convinced in the role performed by student teacher in the school, and her fear of parents complaints regarding student teacher when making a mistake, and overload of burdens on the school principal to the degree that she has no time for supervising and earring of student teacher, in addition to cooperating teacher lack of knowledge regarding her role towards student teacher and of the importance of training stage for her, while university related themes (domains) [cooperating supervisor program preparation procedures] received high ratings which are indications on the existence of strength elements in aspects related to these domains and elements in aspects related to these domains and on its effectiveness in many aspects, and this might be due to the clarity of program preparation procedures and the existence of a training plan, and the training process passing through sequential and successive stages as well as administrative communication and control procedures with students to find out the important problem facing by students as well as solving difficulties as much as possible; as well as supervisor sense of responsibility and his commitment to his role and his provision of appropriate feedback that improves teaching skills continuously, and this is consistent with Farrell (2008) study, org et al (2004) study and

Josoh (2011) study. But is inconsistent with manzer – Abbas & Lu, (2013) and shahin (2010) studies in terms of obstacles order according to their importance.

4.2 Results related to the second question

Is there a relationship between students' teachers' perspectives of practicum obstacles and the following variables: Major, type of application school? In answering this question, means and standard deviations of practicum obstacles according to student major and school of application, were used as well as t test to show statistically significant differences between mean scores and results are displayed in table 3.

Table 3. Means, standard deviation and t test for the effect of major and application school type on practicum obstacles.

		N	Mean	SD	T	DF	Sig
Major	Scientific	29	2.53	0.199	2.63	69	0.010
	Humanistic	42	2.38	0.256			
Type of school of application	Secondary	36	2.45	0.273	0.100	69	0.920
	Middle	35	2.44	0.214			

Table 3. showed statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) level due to major variable and these differences were in favor of scientific majors, however no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) level, due to the type of school of application, were found and this might be due to the nature of these majors and their teaching methods given their special needs such as visual audio aids from laboratories and teaching instruments and students teachers need for the cooperation of different parties at the cooperating school with them to the good execution of instruction and this is consistent with shahin (2010) study.

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of the current study was to identify practicum obstacles at Najran University from student teachers perspectives, and the following conclusions were reached.

1. The most serious obstacles in practicum according to their importance, as seen by student teachers were as follows Cooperating school, school principal and cooperating teacher, while obstacles less serious were: educational supervisor and program preparation procedures.
2. The most important issues that cause impairment in practicum is: Teaching in a secondary school; large numbers of students per classroom, unavailability of advanced educational technologies; large numbers of practicum students from the same major at the cooperating school; supervision and administrative work load; rarity of following up student teacher inside the classroom; distrust in student teacher by cooperating teacher; exploiting her for exciting all her school deities and interfering directly in the lesson course; educational supervisors is influence, in his evaluation, by opinions of those around his and his interference in the lesson course, and poor electronic communication skills with those in charge of the program.
3. Scientific majors (physics, chemistry and mathematics, suffered from obstacles during practicum more than humanistic majors' Arabic language and English language.
4. Type of training school has no effect in obstacles rising during practicum training.

6. Recommendations

Based on the previous results, researcher advises those in charge of practicum program at Najran University with the importance of continuous development of practicum program objectives according to the age developments advances and variables, holding training workshop for students teachers during field training, that enhance their abilities in good planning and practicing modern teaching method, the provision of guides specific to practicum with unified visions for each of education supervisors, student, school principal and cooperating teacher. It is also necessary to set specific critical for application schools that make space for the accurate and effective implementation of the training process, coordination with various parties participating and involved in practicum training process such as supervisors, directorates of education, cooperating teachers and school principals at cooperating schools before starting the practicum program to have consistency between educational ideas and practical application of students, teachers.

7. Suggestions

Conducting similar studies with other larger and more representative sample and the study of these obstacles from other people such as supervisors and cooperating teachers perspective in order to be more comprehensive.

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