

**WHAT MENTORS AND SUPERVISORS DO? AN ANALYSIS IN THE LIGHT OF
NCTE SCHOOL INTERNSHIP FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES FOR TWO
YEAR B Ed COURSE**

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WHAT MENTORS AND SUPERVISORS DO? AN ANALYSIS IN THE LIGHT OF NCTE SCHOOL INTERNSHIP FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES FOR TWO YEAR B Ed COURSE

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Abstract

Internship is one of the most important elements of any professional course. This is where the student implements the theoretical knowledge in actual situations. School internship has been an integral part of teacher education programmes from the inception itself. Student teachers get the opportunity to apply the techniques, methods, approaches and theories in actual classroom situation during school internship. This phase of the teacher education programme is also considered as the make or break phase for the student teachers. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) revised the course structure of B Ed and M Ed programmes in India in the year 2014. As a result, the course duration of B Ed programme was extended to two years. School internship period for the B Ed students also was extended to 20 weeks which previously ranged from six to seven weeks. NCTE also provided detailed guidelines for the school internship of B Ed students in the year 2016. Roles and responsibilities of each and every partner in the teacher education programme were clearly delineated. Two important players in the school internship programme for the student teacher are the mentor teacher in the school and the supervising teacher in the institute of teacher education. The paper attempts to explain what are the important roles assigned to the mentor teachers and the supervising teachers by the NCTE and how and to what extent these roles are played by them. Data has been collected from the teacher educators who act as faculty supervisors during school internship of B Ed students of various institutions of teacher education under Kannur Univeristy of Kerala state.

Key Terms – School internship, NCTE School Internship Framework, Guidelines for Two Year B Ed Course

1. Context of the Study

Internship is one of the most important elements of any professional course. This is where the student teacher implements the theoretical knowledge in actual situations. School internship has been an integral part of teacher education programmes from the inception itself. Student teachers get the opportunity to apply the techniques, methods, approaches and theories in actual classroom situation during school internship. This phase of the teacher education programme is also considered as the make or break phase for the student teacher.

Numerous studies have been carried out on school internship by researchers, academicians and administrators from all over the world. And the results revealed the issues, concerns, problems, challenges and how student teachers tried to overcome these. Joshi (2006) found out that insufficient numbers of faculty members in the college as well as lack of proper support and cooperation from the part of the practice teaching schools are two major issues faced by interns. Goh and Mathews (2011) identified that meeting expectations of school based mentor and impressing him/her is one of the major concerns for the student teachers during internship. Studies has emphasized the importance of three way conferences between the mentor teacher, student teacher and the faculty supervisor which facilitated 'the triad' to support each other emotionally, to know each other, to reflect and to share information. It reveal that 'the triad' helps to learns about others' needs and were able to provide support for the needing one through open and trustful communication. It also helped in clarifying miscommunications and misunderstandings and allowed student teachers to reflect upon their overall performances in the field and to officially receive comments from the cooperating teachers.

National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) revised the course structure of B Ed and M Ed programmes in India in the year 2014. As a result the course duration of B Ed programme was extended to two years. School internship period for the B Ed students also was extended to 20 weeks which previously ranged from four to six weeks. NCTE also provided detailed guidelines for the school internship of B Ed students in the year 2016. Roles and responsibilities of each and every partner in the teacher education programme were clearly delineated. Two important players in the school internship programme for the student teachers are the mentor teacher in the school and the faculty supervisor in the

college/department of teacher education. The internship guidelines clearly mention what the mentor teachers and faculty supervisors are supposed to do prior to the internship, during the internship and after the completion of internship. It asks the teacher education institution to identify willful and competent teachers from the practice teaching schools as mentor teachers and give them intensive orientation regarding the roles and responsibilities of the mentor teacher. The mentor teacher is also considered one of the important persons responsible for the assessment of the student teachers' performance during internship for which they must be oriented to the use of tools like rating scales, questionnaires, observation schedules etc. by the faculty supervisor or the teacher education institute. The teacher education institution and the faculty supervisor are supposed to continuously interact with the mentor teacher and the lab school in order to equip them with the necessary details for the organisation of internship. The mentor teacher and faculty supervisor together are advised to design need-based and locally relevant activities for the student teachers. The teacher education institution and the faculty supervisor are also advised to have orientation cum-consultation meetings with the mentor teachers as well as the principals of lab schools on regular basis. The study has been conducted to analyse how and to what extent the important roles assigned to the mentor teachers and the faculty supervisors by the NCTE are performed in reality.

2. Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study were as follows.

1. To analyse the roles played by faculty supervisors and mentor teachers of various colleges of teacher education.
2. To compare the roles and responsibilities recommended by the National Council for Teacher Education in its school internship guidelines document with the actual roles and responsibilities played by the faculty supervisors and mentor teachers.

3. Methodology

Normative survey has been employed for the study. Fifteen teacher educators were selected purposefully from four different colleges of teacher education under the Kannur University in Kerala. They were interviewed with the help of an interview schedule. The collected data were analysed qualitatively to identify the roles and responsibilities assigned to and performed by faculty supervisors, mentor teachers and heads of institutions during school internship.

4. Results and Discussion

The major suggestions by NCTE regarding the roles of mentor teachers and faculty supervisors can be categorized into five headings. The findings from the analysis of the interview data collected from various teacher educators who act as faculty supervisors for the student teachers during internship are also given under each headings to make the comparison easier.

(i) Orientation given to the competent and willing mentor teachers regarding the school internship programme

NCTE suggests that competent mentor teachers should come forward willingly to take up the responsibility and these teachers should be given intensive orientation regarding internship by the teacher education institutes.

The data collected from the teacher educators of different teacher education institutes revealed that neither faculty supervisors nor heads of teacher education institutes seek permission or willingness from the teachers who are selected as mentor teachers directly. A request letter with the list of student teachers who are interested to do internship in a specific school along with their subjects is prepared by the head of the teacher education institute and sent to the Principals/Head teacher of the school concerned via post or through student teachers. Mentor teachers are selected by the Principals/Head teacher of the school once this request is received. *So, the willingness aspect or voluntarily coming forward of mentor teachers is somewhat compromised.*

No teacher education institute from which the data were collected provided any sort of orientation programme for the mentor teachers regarding internship programme. Teachereducators were of the opinion that, as the teachers who act as mentor teachers are from the schools where the student teachers of the respective teacher education institute have been going for internship for the past several years, the mentor teachers know the exercises and they don't need any orientation regarding this. Only newly joined teachers in the schools who are selected as mentor teachers need some orientation and they are given this by the faculty supervisor in their first school visit in the first week of school internship. *The intensive orientation by the teacher education institute for the mentor teachers does not take place.*

(ii) Giving detailed guidelines to the mentor teachers and the Principals/Head teachers for the assessment of the performance of student teachers during internship

NCTE suggests that the mentor teachers and Principals/Head teachers of the schools where the student teachers undergo internship should be given proper guidance and orientation regarding various assessment tools for assessing the performance of student teachers during internship.

But, the teacher educators responded that such an orientation also does not take place as majority of the teachers who act as mentor teachers have been handling the same tool for the past several years. Only one evaluation Rubric is used for assessment. Mentor teachers are given this Rubric in the beginning of the internship by some teacher education institutes and at the end of internship by some others. *Teacher educators from two of the teacher education institutes revealed that they don't consider the assessment done by the mentor teachers while finalizing the marks of student teachers for the school internship as the marks are not given critically and almost all student teachers receives high marks.*

(iii) Continuous interaction between mentor teachers and faculty supervisors

NCTE internship guidelines points out the importance of continuous interaction between the mentor teachers and faculty supervisors in order to exchange information regarding the performances of the student teachers and to give and receive suggestions and ideas for improving the internship experience for the student teachers.

Teachers from only one teacher education institute informed that they contact the mentor teachers periodically, if not regularly. Mentor teachers contact faculty supervisors for filing complaints regarding the performance or behavior of the student teachers most of the times. Most of the teacher educators who responded informed that feedback about the performance of the student teachers are received from the mentor teachers only when the faculty supervisors visit the school for observing the classes of student teachers. *Regular interaction between mentor teachers and faculty supervisors were absent in most of the cases.*

(iv) Designing of need based locally relevant activities for the student teachers by the faculty supervisors in collaboration with the mentor teachers

Designing of any need based locally relevant activities, such as survey of historical monuments in the school neighborhood, interview with local artists and artisans, meetings with retired award winning soldiers and teachers, visits to places of cultural importance, assessment of the mechanism of neighborhood cleanliness etc. by the faculty supervisors in collaboration with mentor teachers to be conducted by the student teachers during internship is one of the important recommendation by the NCTE.

Unfortunately, this was also could not be carried out by the faculty supervisors from whom data were collected. Some teachers responded that when they discussed about such activities, mentor teachers responded that the *school will be carrying out several activities and the student teachers can participate in those and there is no need to design special activities.*

(v) *Providing internship handbook to the Principals/Head teachers and mentor teachers*

NCTE in its guidelines for school internship mentions about an internship handbook which it will be publishing and asks the teacher education institutes to provide copies of the same to the Principals/Head teachers and mentor teachers of the schools where student teachers undergo practice teaching.

Unfortunately, this document is yet to be published and most of the teacher educators who were interviewed were not even aware of the NCTE guidelines for school internship published in the year 2016. *Neither custom made internship handbook was prepared by the teacher education institute nor copies of those were handed over to the Principals/Head teachers and mentor teachers.*

5. Conclusion

Even if NCTE provided detailed guidelines on school internship by clearly mentioning the roles and responsibilities of each and every player involved in the process including that of mentor teachers and faculty supervisors, it was found out that the guidelines were not followed by the faculty supervisors of the colleges of teacher education and the mentor teachers in the schools. Both of them continue to do what they have been doing for the past several years. Even if we consider the practical difficulties of implementing some suggestions by NCTE, a complete denial of the same was observed.

The restructuring of the teacher education curriculum in the country has been designed and implemented with the purpose of enhancing its quality and thereby creating quality educational practitioners. But the field realities are not so hopeful and pose some critical issues. A more thought-out programmes of actions are required to reap the desired fruits of the restructuring of teacher education in India. There must be more critical and significant efforts from all stake holders to enrich the quality of teacher education as it is now decided to introduce four year integrated teacher education programme in the country.

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