

**SCHOOL INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES OF TWO VISUALLY  
CHALLENGED STUDENT TEACHERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

School internship is one of the most important phases of any teacher education programme. This is the stage where the student teachers apply the theoretical knowledge and skills they had acquired from the institute of teacher education in real life situations. School internship can be termed as a litmus test for a student teacher. National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education - NCFTE (2009) envisioned school internship as one of the three major aspects of a teacher education programme. National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) of India revised the course structure of Bachelor of Education (B Ed) and Master of Education (M Ed) degree programmes in the year 2014 by incorporating the major recommendations of NCFTE-2009. However the NCFTE-2009 document as well as the revised course structures of B Ed and M Ed degree programmes did not give much emphasis to the inclusion of the differentially abled student teachers and the ways and means in which they have to be included, even if both the documents gave due emphasis for the inclusion of the differentially children with disabilities at the school level. This paper analyses the school internship experiences of two visually challenged student teachers who completed their B Ed programme from institute of teacher education under Kannur University in Kerala. Phenomenological research design has been adopted for the study. First hand descriptions of the experiences were elicited from the participants through semi structured interviews. The interview data were analysed to derive categories and themes with the help of VanManen's (1990) phenomenological data analysis framework. These themes were combined to explain the school internship experiences of the two visually challenged student teachers. The major themes identified were (i) Lack of freedom, (ii) Limited mentoring, (iii) Adaptive instructional and assessment strategies, (iv) Technological experiences (v) Relationship dynamics.

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**Key Terms: School Internship, Student Teacher, Inclusive Education, Visually Challenged Students**

## **1. Context of the study**

Internship is considered to be one of the important phases of any professional education programmes. It is the phase where the student teacher (intern) gets hands on experiences where he/she is asked to apply the theoretical knowledge in practical field situations. It is very difficult for one to enter any profession without basic exposure to its practical aspects. It is more so for teacher education programmes. The theoretical foundation required for becoming a teacher including different classroom strategies, methods of teaching, educational psychology, philosophical tenets of education, classroom management and time management strategies etc. are usually acquired by the student teachers during the period of orientation they receive from the teacher education institutes. But the ability to apply these competencies in the actual classroom situations is entirely different and this is where some of the student teachers face challenges. Learning how to transform knowledge into practice can be considered as the major objective of school internship in any teacher education programme.

School internship, popularly known as practice teaching is the phase where the student teachers start acquiring the competencies required for entering the teaching profession. Teachers, on a regular basis, are confronted with complex situations during the teaching learning process, which require decision making based on different kinds of knowledge and judgements that can involve high stakes outcomes for the students' future. A student teacher is exposed to similar situations during their school internship where they are required to perform as a regular teacher, based on the knowledge and skills they have acquired. A differently abled student teacher may find it even harder to cope with such situations in a school during internship. His/her limitations may hinder him/her from participating in the school internship completely and make full use of all the available experiences.

### ***1.1. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009 and Inclusive Education of Student Teachers***

The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) formulated by the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) in the year 2009 is one of the most important documents in this area in India. The document highlighted a new approach to the curricular areas in teacher education. As per NCFTE-2009, the curriculum of teacher education has to be broadly dealt under three areas viz. (i) Foundations of education, (ii) Curriculum and pedagogy and (iii) School internship. The foundations of education had to include learner studies, contemporary studies, and educational studies, whereas Curriculum

and pedagogy had to consist of curriculum studies, pedagogic studies and assessment and evaluation studies. The document visualised the school internship of student teachers by situating the practice of teaching in the broader context of vision and the role of teacher and sustained engagement with learners and schools. ‘The rationale of each major area along with curricular provisions, both in theory and practicum, had been indicated, leaving scope for individual reflection on the part of the institutions offering teacher education and the academics associated with them (NCTE, 2009).

The NCFTE of 2009 is a comprehensive document that gave due emphasis for the quality improvement of teacher education by including ways and means to give training to pre service as well as in service teachers in order to meet the needs of the twenty first century students. One of the major areas covered by the document is inclusive education. It was observed that there were two kinds of exclusion prevalent in schools largely because of the inadequate preparation of teachers to address diversity in the classroom. ‘The first one is the exclusion of the children with disabilities of different kinds and learning difficulties. Neither does the teacher understand their needs nor what s/he can do to make learning possible for them’ (NCTE, 2009). It was suggested that in order to enable the implementation of The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection and Full Participation) Act, 1995 provision for free and compulsory education up to the age of 18 years for all children with disabilities (Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, 1996), teacher education institutions had to reframe their programme courses to include the perspective, concept and strategies for inclusive education. The second and more insidious pattern of exclusion was found to be the social exclusion of children who came from socially and economically deprived backgrounds, like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), minority and other communities, girls and children with diverse learning needs. It was suggested that there was a dire need to equip teachers to overcome their biases in this regard and to develop professional capacities to address these challenges.

NCFTE -2009 further argued that ‘it is necessary that teachers who teach and manage the classroom are sensitized and made aware of the philosophy of inclusive education and oriented to the different kinds of adjustments that schools have to make in terms of infrastructure, curriculum, teaching methods and other school practices to relate teaching to the needs of all learners’ (NCTE, 2009). Even if the NCFTE-2009 document discussed about inclusive education at length and approaches and strategies to make the schools more inclusive and accessible to all children, not much has been discussed about the preparation of student teachers with special needs. The fifth chapter of the document that is titled as ‘The

Preparation of Teacher Education’ also does not discuss inclusive education of student teachers who are differentially abled.

### ***1.2. School Internship: Framework and Guidelines 2016 by NCTE and Inclusive Education of Student Teachers***

The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) of India revamped the programme structure of teacher education programmes at the secondary school level (Bachelor of Education – B Ed) as well as master level (Master of Education – M Ed) in the year 2014 by incorporating the major suggestions of the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2009). The duration of both the programmes were extended to two years. Courses offered under the programmes also underwent major overhauling. Inclusive Education was given due importance in the curriculum for teacher education. NCTE had also published a detailed framework and guidelines for the school internship under the new programmes. The period of school internship for B Ed programme was extended to twenty weeks in order to provide the student teachers a comprehensive and elongated exposure to the actual school environment. But, both in the curricular framework proposed by the NCTE for two year B Ed programme as well as the framework for school internship, nothing has been discussed about the inclusion of student teachers who are differentially abled or the ways and means in which they should be provided learning experiences from the teacher education institutes as well as internship school.

Some of the major tasks suggested for the secondary level student teachers in the framework for school internship by the NCTE are enumerated here.

- Understanding the Internship School and the community around.
- Analysis of school syllabus and textbooks.
- Observing the classroom teaching of regular teachers.
- Observation of classroom teaching of peer student-teachers.
- Preparation of case study of the internship school and the innovative activities that the school undertakes.
- Preparation of Lesson Plans and Unit Plans.
- Teaching the units of the prescribed syllabus in two subjects currently being taught in the school.
- Teaching as a substitute teacher.
- Mobilisation and development of teaching-learning resources.
- Preparation of a question papers and other assessment tools.

- Preparation of a diagnostic tests and organisation of remedial teaching.
- Undertake case study of a child.
- Undertake action research project on at least one problem area of schooling.
- Community work, community survey etc.
- Maintenance of a reflective diary or journal to record day to day happenings and reflections thereon.
- Writing a term paper on a selected theme.

A differentially abled student teacher, especially a visually challenged may find it difficult to complete many of these tasks. And inability to complete these tasks successfully can ultimately affect the self-confidence as well as self-esteem of the student teacher. The study thus analyses the first hand descriptions of school internship experiences of two visually challenged student teachers to gain better understanding about the meaning they attribute to the phenomenon of school internship.

## ***2. Statement of the Problem***

McIntyre, Byrd, and Foxx (1996) argued that despite overwhelming positive feeling about the efficacy of field experiences, what occurs during the field experience is more important than the length of the experience. Thus focus should be rather on understanding how the school internship affects individual student teachers and why do such effects take place. Phenomenology is concerned with the life world of human experience as it is lived. From identification of the experience of phenomena, a deeper understanding of the meaning of that experience is sought. This occurs through increasingly deeper and layered reflection by the use of rich descriptive language. Hence, the present study aims to gain an in depth understanding of the lived experiences of visually challenged student teachers during their school internship through phenomenological research approach.

## ***3. Research Questions***

The study has been formulated to find answers to the following research questions.

- i) What is the meaning of school internship experience for visually challenged student teachers?
- ii) How does school internship affect the way visually challenged student teachers teach, learn and live?

## ***4. Objectives of the Study***

The following objectives of the study have been formulated in the light of the selected research questions.

- i) To gain an in depth understanding of the lived experiences of visually challenged student teachers during internship.
- ii) To analyse how internship affects the way visually challenged student teachers teach, learn, and live.

### **5. Methodology Adopted for the Study**

The present study is qualitative in nature. It is based upon the subjective perspectives of the research participants to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. The ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects of the present study are thus founded on social constructivism, interpretivism and phenomenology. Primary qualitative data have been used in the study. The design adopted for the study is Hermeneutic Phenomenology. Phenomenology is suitable to understand shared experiences in depth and find out the meanings attributed by the people who experience that particular phenomenon. Hermeneutic Phenomenology goes a bit further by incorporating interpretation of the first hand descriptions of experiences by the participants in order to reveal otherwise hidden details also. One on one semi structured in-depth interview was the method used to collect data from the respondents. The respondents were interviewed more than once during their school internship to collect details regarding their experiences. Interview guide specifically prepared for the purpose by the researchers which was validated by experts has been used for conducting interviews with the participants.

Transcribed interview data were analysed as per the thematic analysis framework proposed by Max VanManen (1990). He suggested that Phenomenological themes can be understood as the structures of experience. According to him, when one tries to analyse a phenomenon, he/she is actually trying to determine what the themes are or what the experiential structures that make up that experience are. Van Manen (1990) proposed three approaches for analyzing phenomenological data in order to uncover or isolate themes around which the phenomenon is structured viz. *The (i) Wholistic or Sententious Approach*, *(ii) The Selective or Highlighting Approach* and *The (iii) Detailed or Line-by-Line Approach*. A combination of all these three approaches has been used to isolate the themes.

### **6. Discussion of Results**

The result of the study is presented in two parts viz. Synopses of interviews and Themes emerged form Analyses. Synopses of interviews consist of brief descriptions of the transcripts of the interview data collected from the respondents. The themes emerged from

analyses part consists of the themes developed through the qualitative analysis of the interview data using the framework proposed by VanManen (1990).

Two Visually challenged student teachers were interviewed for the purpose of the study. Details of the respondents are given in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Respondent Details*

<b>Label</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Highest Educational Qualification</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Level/Type of Disability</b>	<b>Prior Teaching Experience</b>
A	Male	23	BA	English	Partial visual impairment	Nil
B	Male	27	MA	Arabic	Full loss of vision	Nil

### **6.1. Major Themes**

This part discusses the major themes emerged through the phenomenological analysis of the interview transcripts of the respondents. There were found to be six major themes emerging from the collected data.

#### *Lack of freedom*

Lack of freedom experienced by student teachers during school internship was found to be a major theme from the collected data. Both the student teachers who were interviewed have communicated this in different ways. Participant A was explicit in communicating the constraints he had experienced whereas Participant B implicitly indicated certain aspects of the same issue. Lack of freedom in general as well as the invisible constraints they faced as visually challenged student teachers were also shared. Lack of freedom in deciding the strategies or methods to be used in the classroom, lack of freedom to interact with the students intimately, lack of freedom to deviate from the prescribed ways of teaching and lack of freedom to be oneself were enumerated as some of the freedoms that got curtailed during the school internship because of the restrictions imposed upon the student teachers by the institute of teacher education as well as the internship school. Participant A explained:

It is meaningless to ask teachers to be role models. Then teachers are forced to act. Acting just like one is in a drama throughout his/her career is not a good thing. One cannot be genuine. The instructions given from the college itself is to act well in the



classroom, not behave. I feel that it should not be the way. Student teachers should be allowed to do things in the classroom in a way which they find quite natural, suitable and effective instead of writing lesson plans and doing things according to it. It should be natural.

Participant B rather focused on the lack of freedom or constraints he had to face during school internship due to his disability. Problems in using the conventional text books and teaching learning materials in the class room, in writing lesson plans and teaching learning materials and non-availability of suitable technology for visually challenged student teacher to prepare for and deliver classes were found to be the major issues that posed challenge in practicing teaching effectively. The following sentences from him explain some of the ways in which his freedom as a student teacher got limited due to his differential ability:

It was very difficult even to write lesson plans for me, as my subject was Arabic and not all my friends who could help me understood Arabic. It was difficult to prepare other learning aids for teaching. So, I used ICT facility instead of showing charts, worksheets etc. I needed help of others to prepare even that also. I didn't have screen reading software in my laptop. Such softwares read English and some other languages, not Arabic. I had a smartphone also. There were several softwares that claimed to read Arabic. Such softwares were not effective. So, I have to seek help from fellow student teachers who taught Arabic with me. I recorded their classes, listened to it and prepared for my class based upon that.

Both the student teachers found lack of freedom to be one of the major aspects of their internship experiences, but in different ways. The areas in which Participant A voiced his concerns were general in nature, whereas the areas in which Participant B experienced lack of freedom were found to be the results of his differential ability. The differences in the intensities of their visual impairment as well as the differences in the internship school environments could be the contributing factors to these disparities in their experiences.

### ***Limited Mentoring***

Mentor teachers play an important role in the school internship experience as they, unlike the supervising teachers, are present with the student teachers throughout the school internship period. Analysis of the interview data revealed a bleak picture about the roles played by the mentor teachers in supporting and motivating the student teachers. Regular interaction with the student teachers, giving proper and timely feedback, interventions to

improve the quality of teaching and classroom management were found to be very less. Participant A reported these issues as:

My mentor teacher did not give any feedbacks even after I asked for it twice. She visited the class regularly and was cooperative, but not that open...

...I faced a lot of disciplinary issues in the class. I could just tell the mentor teacher about the issues as a student teacher. She would tell me not to mind these things.

He did not get much support in solving one of the major issues which was causing serious problems for his classroom teaching. He also did not receive proper feedback from the mentor teacher about his performance so that he could correct and improve. The overall attitude of the mentor teachers was reported to be indifferent by participant A.

The support and guidance received from the mentor teacher varied for Participant B as he had two mentor teachers. He shared his experiences with his mentor teachers as follows:

One mentor teacher was also very helpful. Teacher observed my classes from outside the class, without my knowledge. After observing my first class, the teacher told me to practice more before going to the class. It was actually the problem of having no experience in classroom teaching. Later, the mentor teacher took feedback from the students and informed me that I was doing well. I had two mentor teachers in the high school. One of them was very liberal and the other one was very strict. But, both were cooperative and helpful. The lesson allotted to me for eighth standard was a very difficult one, the students were naughty and the mentor teacher was strict. But, that teacher had not observed even one of my classes. Teacher might have asked the other mentor teacher about the classes.

Even when both the mentor teachers were cooperative, only one of them provided regular support to the student teacher. One of them had not even observed the student teacher's class and had not given him any feedback also. Even though the lack of interventions from one of the mentor teachers was pointed out by participant B, he did not believe that it affected his school internship.

Mentor teachers of both the student teachers had not provided any specific support or resources to the student teachers in order to overcome or manage their disability to perform more effectively in the classroom. Proactive interventions from the mentor teachers were reported to be lacking.

### *Adaptive Instructional and Assessment Strategies*

Both the student teachers used adaptive instructional as well as assessment strategies during their school internship period. Adapting took place at two levels or to overcome two types of challenges. First level was to overcome the challenge faced due to the differential ability of the student teachers and the second level was to overcome the challenges caused by the incongruence between theory and practice.

The activity oriented constructivist pedagogy was the prescribed teaching strategy for the student teachers. But, the student teachers could not implement it all the times due to various factors. The academic level of the students, heavy text book content, time constraint and other intervening factors were pointed out by the student teachers for not being able to use the prescribed method for teaching all the lessons. Also, participant B had to face more challenges as he had 100% visual impairment. He had to seek assistance from others from preparation to implementation of lesson plan in the class. Whereas participant A explained the way in which he taught in the classroom as:

It is not possible to apply actual constructivism in the classroom. I try to deliver the class as per constructivism. If it is an average class, I use lecture method in English. If they have doubts, I would clarify it in Malayalam (their mother tongue). For some simple lessons, constructivism can be used. In some classes students don't like me using English. So, I use Malayalam. I use simple English to deliver class. I ask those who did not understand even after explaining in their mother tongue to come and meet me during lunch break and help them. I use constructivism as per the nature of the class.

...I try to read the students' responses from their facial expressions and modify the class accordingly. But, when the supervising teacher visited for observation, he asked me not to deviate from the lesson plan.

Participant B used some other adaptive strategies for instruction. He sought help from a fellow student teacher who taught the same subject, for preparing lesson plans and learning aids. He even recorded the classes delivered by that fellow student teacher and listened to it and prepared for teaching based on that. In the classroom also, he used certain strategies to overcome the challenge posed by his differential ability. He said:

The students were very responsive. I include them in teaching. It is impossible for me to use lecture method as I can't read out from the text book. So, I make the students read the topics from the text book aloud and then explain the meanings. I give different parts of the topic to different students to read to make sure that other

students listened when one student read out the part of the lesson. I use activity method also. But, most of the times some or other students would be taken out for some other activities. Then, I would change the strategy, so that I can complete the planned lesson.

The assessment strategies used varied for both the participants. When participant A could use visual cues from the students for correcting his instruction, participant B had to rely upon the verbal cues of the students for assessing their understanding. Both of the student teachers responded to be using questioning and written tests as the major tools used for assessment.

### ***Technological Experiences***

Technology was found to be very useful by both the student teachers for effectively performing during the school internship. Even if the availability was an issue, the student teachers used information and communication technology (ICT) resources and facilities to provide good teaching learning experiences as well as to overcome the challenges caused by their differential ability. Participant A found it effective to use technology to maintain discipline in his class. But, the lack of adequate ICT infrastructure posed some challenges for him. He explained an experience of using ICT in his class:

One day I carried my laptop to the class to show a video related to the lesson. I completed the lesson and could not show the video that day because of time constraints. The next day, the students asked me to show them the video before starting the class. I showed it to them. Some of the students went out of the class after the video was finished, just like they leave a movie theatre after the movie was finished.

Participant B used the ICT facilities very effectively for preparation for teaching as well as classroom teaching and found it very useful. He felt that he would not have been able to do the school internship effectively without the assistance of ICT facilities. Even if there were some issues, as he did not get some support because of the special features of the subject he taught, he thought he could use ICT for better planning as well as teaching. He reported:

It was difficult to prepare other learning aids for teaching. So, I used ICT instead of showing charts, worksheets etc. .... I didn't have screen reading software in my laptop. Such softwares read English and some other languages, not Arabic. I have a

smartphone also. I recorded fellow student teacher's class who taught Arabic using the smartphone, listened to the recording and prepared for my class based upon that.

ICT use in the classroom has been found to be enhancing the learning in the students. But, the school internship experiences of the two student teachers with visual impairment revealed an entirely different aspect of the ICT use in the education setting. Both of the participants reported ICT to be having a very crucial role in making their school internship experiences better.

### ***Self Esteem and Teacher Identity***

Teacher identity formation is a very important aspect of any teacher education programme. School internship is the phase of the teacher education programme that contribute heavily to the teacher identity formation of the student teachers. Self-esteem is an important factor that plays a big role in the formation of the personal as well as professional identities. The research participants underwent school internship in two entirely different schools. Their experiences also differed to a great extent, even if there were some areas where both had similar exposures. Participant A did not have a school internship atmosphere that improved his self-esteem as a teacher or had factors that helped him to develop a positive teacher identity. He was aware of this and tried to not get affected by these factors. He had some very bad experiences with the students as well as the teachers of the school. He explained some of his experiences with the students as:

The first day went without any trouble. Next day onwards, the students were much undisciplined. They moved around in the class. They would leave the class and enter the class without seeking permission and would fight with each other. I asked them to be quiet very calmly and then I had to shout. I could not start the lesson that day because of disciplinary issues and felt depressed. I felt further agitated as the students' behavior did not improve even after the mentor teacher came and remained in my class while I was delivering class. All the student teachers who went to this class had the same experience. They all said that the students didn't give even the value of a dog for the student teachers...

.... I am in a fed up situation. I don't think that I can correct these students.

He believed that, he was mistreated by the students as they knew that he was a student teacher. His belief was further reinforced by the fact that all the other student teachers also were treated by the students in the same manner. Even, the presence of the mentor teacher in the class did not create any positive changes in the behavior of the students. He did

not feel that the students behaved in such disrespectful manner because he was visually impaired, but rather because he was a student teacher. The mentor teachers as well as the other teachers of the internship school did not provide adequate support and guidance to the student teachers and this added to his woes. Even though he reported to have such unpleasant experiences during the school internship, he wanted to continue in the teaching profession.

Participant B reported an entirely different scenario. He had very positive experiences with the students as well as the teachers of the internship school. His experiences strengthened his ambition of becoming a teacher and improved his self-esteem. He shared his experiences as:

I didn't have many problems with class management. I understood from attending a PTA meeting that all teachers blamed the students. Teachers said that the students didn't pay attention and they played all the times. But, I didn't feel so. I had some problems in the beginning. But, the mentor teacher intervened and it got solved. After that I got more attached with the students. They helped me to connect my laptop and adjust the projector. The students were not that problematic. Boys were a bit backward in studies. Only some of them were very backward....

... Student teachers are considered not as trainees, but rather as teachers in this school. The head of the school and teachers let the student teachers participate in all programmes except the staff meeting. Student teachers are given due consideration. We are given roles in various co-curricular activities also....

.... I had a feeling till I came for school internship that I can go for any job. But, after undergoing school internship, I feel like I have to get a job as a teacher.

Participant B reported to have had an enhanced self-concept as well as more confidence in his identity as a teacher after spending weeks at the internship school. Even though participant A also believed that he had become a better teacher by the end of the school internship, his self-concept and teacher identity was found to be affected by some of the negative experiences with the students of the internship school.

### ***Relationship Dynamics***

Teaching is a process that requires very positive interpersonal relationships. Not only the relationships between the teachers and students, but also the relationships between the teachers including the head teacher should be healthy for effective education to take place. Relationship with the students, mentor teachers, supervising teachers and even fellow student

teachers were found to have some or other effect on the internship experiences of the respondents. The school environment that emphasised on the importance of healthy relationships between the student teachers as well as teachers was experienced by participant B whereas it was not that good for participant A. Participant A explained his relationships with others during the school internship as:

Mentor teacher came and visited the class regularly and was cooperative, but not that open. No interaction with the head of the institution was there.... Relationship with the students was good except in one class. Some students came to meet the student teachers in the staff room for the clarification of doubts related to lessons and for the submission of notebooks for correction. The students of eighth standard wish us wherever they meet us. But, the ninth standard students consider us as their friends and interacted very informally and freely. I have good relationship with fellow student teachers and co-operate with and help each other. We are treated as trainee teachers by other teachers of the school and they address us so, even in front of the students.

Participant A reported that the student teachers who underwent internship at the school where he was placed had strained relationships with the teachers of the school. He reported that it was not mutual. Even though he student teachers tried to maintain healthy relationships with the teachers, the teachers were not interested and considered the student teachers as inferior to them and treated them with such an attitude. Participant B had rather positive experiences to share about the relationships he had with the teachers, head of the institution, students, mentor teacher as well as other student teachers. He said:

The feeling that we are student teachers is no more there in our minds. We feel like teachers. Students consider us just like regular teachers. Teachers and Principal also consider us like teachers. That was the instruction given by the head of the institution as well as the mentor teachers. They told us that we are teachers just like them and we need to do things and behave accordingly.... They treated us as equal except on some very rare occasions and interacted with us very freely also. ...

I maintained good relationship with the students also. The high school students still come and ask me if I can go and give classes to them.

The relationship dynamics were not affected by the fact that these student teachers were differentially abled. All the other student teachers who were not differentially abled also were found to have these types of relationship dynamics as per the responses of the participants.

## **7. Reflections**

The school internship experiences of the two visually challenged student teachers were found to be a combination of positive as well as negative aspects. But, rather than focusing on the negative aspects, participants tried to overcome these challenges in order to successfully complete the school internship. The challenges faced were two fold. Apart from the usual challenges faced by the student teachers during school internship, the participants had to face some challenges due to their disabilities also. But, they had tried to overcome these challenges by adaptive and innovative strategies with the help of available resources as well as human support. The results of the study threw light on the factors in school internship, which otherwise would have gone unnoticed.

Specific challenges faced by the student teachers because of their differential ability involved the inability to use the recommended pedagogic approaches in the classrooms as well as the lack of availability of resources and facilities suitable or visually challenged teachers to teach the students effectively. The student teachers themselves had to seek out ways and means to overcome the challenges they faced due to their differential ability during the school internship. No specific support or guidance for these student teachers was provided by the teacher education institutes as well as by the internship school. It is imperative that there should be specific interventions from the part of the policy makers and authorities concerned in these matters. Provision of supportive technological devices and facilities for the differentially abled student teachers, sensitization of the mentor teachers regarding the challenges faced by such student teachers, provision of continuous morale boosting interventions by the supervising teachers, and developing a 'buddy system' where one of the fellow student teachers provide appropriate and timely support to the differentially abled student teacher are some means for improving the effectiveness of the school internship experience as well as the teacher education programme as a whole for the differentially abled student teachers.

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