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Council for Teacher Education Foundation (CTEF, Gujarat Chapter)

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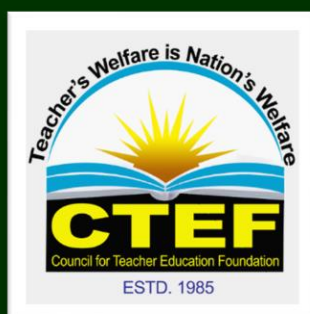
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Evaluating the Effectiveness of a School Internship Programme among Prospective Teachers

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Abstract

The Internship Programme is a pivotal element of teacher education, equipping prospective teachers with the professional skills and practical exposure required for effective classroom practice. This study evaluates the effectiveness of a School Internship Programme (SIP) based on the perceptions and feedback of 25 IV-semester B.Ed. student-teachers from various institutions across India. The objectives are to assess how SIP influences their preparedness for teaching, identify challenges encountered, and understand institutional support mechanisms. A structured questionnaire, validated through a pilot study and expert review, was administered via Google Forms. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, primarily percentage analysis. Despite the small sample size, a recognised limitation, the findings indicate that student-teachers significantly improved in classroom management, instructional design, and professional confidence, aided by support from supervisors and schools. The study underscores the necessity of well-structured, reflective internship programmes that effectively bridge theoretical learning with practical application.

Keywords: School Internship Programme, prospective teachers, teaching skills, internship effectiveness, experiential learning, teacher education

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving world, education systems are increasingly focused on preparing students for real-world challenges and providing them with practical skills and experiences. One of the most important parts of the school system is the teachers. The quality of learning and, by extension, the quality of schooling is directly linked to the quality of the teacher (Dange & Siddaraju, 2020). Society generally regards the teacher as a guide, a beacon, or a source of illumination, someone who advances the cause of education and uplifts individuals from hardship and despair, inspiring them to strive for greater moral and intellectual development. So, in order to give a good education, teachers at every level must be well-

trained and educated (Khan and Irshadullah 2018). UNESCO says that teacher quality includes things like information, skills, competency, motivation, and how well lessons are taught in the classroom. These things can be learned through theory and practice. Huang et al. (2014) and Voss et al. (2006) back up the idea that important characteristics for teachers are being experts in their fields, having good communication skills, having a sense of fun, being friendly, having good teaching skills, and being full of energy. Even though some of the important traits may be innate, a lot of them can be learned in teacher training. For a teacher to have these important traits, a course that prepares them for the job must focus on both the theoretical and practical. Most of the pre-service teacher education programmes given by different institutions around the world do this by giving the student-teachers hands-on experience with how the school and classroom work. People often call this practice teaching. For a teacher to have these important qualities, the training they take to get ready for the job needs to focus on both theory and practice.

As a result, the incorporation of internship programs within the school curriculum has gained significant attention as an effective way to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application (NEP, 2020). These programs offer students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a professional setting, enhance their employability, and make informed career decisions (Thapa, 2024). A professional learning opportunity known as an internship provides students with useful, hands-on work that is relevant to their area of study or career interest. Internships provide students the chance to introduce fresh perspectives and energy into the real situation, develop talent, and possibly create a pipeline for future full-time workers. Ngoben and Nekhavhambe (2024) in their research stated that an internship is a crucial and essential component of all training and professional courses that gives prospective teachers the chance to comprehend and experience the actual field work and unique tasks they are being prepared for. A prospective teacher refers to an individual currently undergoing professional training, such as B.Ed., B.P.Ed., or M.Ed., with the goal of becoming a fully qualified teacher in the near future (Maiti, 2015). These programs equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the teaching profession. Internship during these programmes offers a welcoming setting where prospective teachers learn by doing practical work and applying their academic knowledge. While working in the real field and organisation, internships improve self-confidence, sharpen necessary abilities, include life skills, cultivate a positive attitude toward the profession, and raise the social maturity of trainees (Chadha K.P., 2021). Additionally, it improves prospective teachers' independence, social development, and interpersonal abilities (Jawabri, 2017; Gupta, 2019; Anjum, 2020).

The value of an internship programme in teacher education has been stated by Parveen and Mirza (2012) since it helps prospective teachers to become professionally prepared. Through the internship, they get a proper grasp of the teaching profession and have a real chance to shape their future employment possibilities in that field. It is a method of giving prospective teachers firsthand experience with the numerous tasks they will be doing in the future. The Education Commission (1964–1966), National Commission on Teachers (1983–1985), National Policy on Education (1986), Acharya Ramamurti Committee (1990), National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009–2010), NCTE Regulation (2014), as well as recent initiatives like the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) and the programs offered by the Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs), are just a few of the educational commissions frameworks and initiatives that have recognized the value of internships in teacher education. Internships are advantageous for both new candidates and government agencies. It gives new candidates a chance to experience the demands and working circumstances of the modern, professional environment. So it's safe to say that it gives the prospective teachers a better idea of what is required of them in terms of education and training for their job. It enables individuals to comprehend how theory and practice relate, which improves their understanding of their capacity to meet the objectives specified for diverse vocations (Saleha Parveen 2012).

Globally, teacher education has evolved to include rigorous field engagement in teaching skills such as practice teaching, enabling the prospective teachers to experience school dynamics, develop pedagogical confidence, and acquire reflective teaching practices (Suphasri & Chinokul, 2021). In India, a 20-week internship component is mandated during B.Ed. programmes (NCTE, 2014) as it aimed at fulfilling this objective. These internships expose prospective teachers to classroom teaching, lesson planning, student assessments, school documentation, and co-curricular responsibilities, etc.

While existing literature states the importance of internships in enhancing professional development, there remains a gap in understanding the quality, structure, and practical impact of the programmes from the perspective of prospective teachers themselves. This study addresses that gap by evaluating the effectiveness of the School Internship Programme through the experiences of prospective teachers from diverse teacher education institutions. It also identifies the challenges they face and the support provided by teacher education institutions and mentors, aiming to derive insights that can aid practice in teacher education.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is rooted in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), which conceptualises learning as a process where knowledge emerges through the transformation of experience. According to Kolb, effective learning involves a four-stage cycle, i.e, concrete Experience, which shows the direct engagement in tasks; reflective observation, which shows reflection on those experiences; abstract conceptualisation, which involves forming generalisations; and active Experimentation, as applying those concepts in new situations.

The internship serves as a practical experience where prospective teachers engage in classroom practice. Through journals, diaries, supervisor feedback, and peer discussions, they engage in reflective observation, which allows them to evaluate and refine their teaching practices. These reflections guide their abstract conceptualisation of teaching strategies and classroom dynamics, which are subsequently tested in lesson planning and teaching during the internship. This cyclical model helps to justify the pedagogical design of school internships as well as informs the present study's approach to understanding how prospective teachers internalise and implement theoretical concepts. It aligns with the study's emphasis on the development of integrated teaching skills, reflective practice, and real-world problem-solving among teacher trainees.

Review of Related Literature

Student internships play a significant role in helping prospective teachers transform and ready to use their professional skills in teaching fields. The NCTE Regulations of 2009 aimed to expand the scope of practice teaching in India by recognising the importance of exposing student-teachers to all aspects of school activities and programmes. NCTE (2014) Regulations took further steps to enhance the 'Field Engagement' component by extending its duration to 20 weeks in elementary and secondary teacher education programmes such as D.El.Ed., B.El.Ed., B.Ed, B.A. B.Ed., B.Sc. B.Ed, and B.Ed. M.Ed. This 20-week period was divided into two parts, with four weeks and sixteen weeks allocated to the first and second year of two-year Programmes, and the second, third, and fourth years of four-year Programmes. Within the 16-week engagement, 14 weeks were dedicated to school internships, while the remaining two weeks were focused on engagement with a field other than the school, such as community engagement. The majority of the research has highlighted the outcomes of school internship Programmes. For instance, a study by Smith and Johnson (2018) found that students who participated in internship Programmes reported higher levels of self-confidence, improved problem-solving skills, and a better understanding of their career goals. Similarly, research conducted by Anderson et al. (2019) revealed that students who engaged in internships demonstrated higher levels of motivation and academic achievement. Johnson and

Davis (2020) found that internships facilitated the development of essential workplace skills such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking. Furthermore, a study by Brown and Thompson (2017) demonstrated that internships provided prospective students with opportunities to enhance their technical and professional skills, which were highly valued by prospective teachers. Further internship Programmes have been found to be instrumental in helping students explore potential career paths. Research conducted by White and Black (2021) highlighted that internships played a crucial role in clarifying students' career goals and helping them make informed decisions about their future. Additionally, Lee and Miller (2019) identified that internships provided students with valuable networking opportunities, enabling them to establish connections with professionals in their desired fields. However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges and limitations associated with school internship Programmes. A study by Martinez and Ramirez (2018) emphasised the need for effective mentorship and guidance during internships to maximise their impact on student learning and growth. Additionally, research by Thompson et al. (2020) identified the need for clear Programme objectives, structured evaluations, and consistent support mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of internship experiences. Msiska and Salik (2016) provide more evidence that internships play an essential role by pointing out that practicum experiences among pre-service teachers are frequently referred to as the most crucial portion of the teacher education Programme. This finding attests to the significance of internships. School Internship Framework and Guidelines (2016) from NCTE has suggested that 80% of the time for internships should be in government schools and 20% of the time should be in private schools, with jobs like learning about the internship and the community around it, analysing the school's curriculum and textbooks, and so on.

Research Question

- What is the impact of the internship Programme provided to prospective teachers?
- How do prospective teachers perceive the influence of the internship Programme?
- What are the constraints faced by prospective teachers during their internship?
- What are the key components and processes of the internship Programme for prospective teachers?

Objectives of the study

- To gain a comprehensive understanding of the process and structure of the internship Programme for prospective teachers.

- To examine the effectiveness of the internship Programme provided to prospective teachers in terms of their professional development and preparedness for the teaching profession.
- To identify and analyse the constraints and challenges faced by prospective teachers during their internship period.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach with a predominantly quantitative orientation, supplemented by qualitative insights derived from open-ended responses and interpretation of Likert-scale data. The mixed-methods technique was used to capture both quantitative patterns in prospective teachers' perceptions and the deeper contextual explanations behind such patterns. While the quantitative component gave an overview of trends across respondents, the qualitative narratives enabled a better understanding of obstacles, variability in institutional practices, and perceived gaps within the internship structure.

Research Design

A descriptive survey design was adopted to investigate the experiences of prospective teachers engaging in School Internship Programmes (SIPs). The approach was acceptable due to the study's purpose of documenting perceptions rather than demonstrating causal linkages. The qualitative component additionally supported the interpretation of statistical patterns by identifying emerging themes from participants' reflections.

Sampling Procedure and Participants

The study used purposive sampling, purposely selecting participants based on their completion of the 20-week internship component stipulated under NCTE (2014) Regulations. The sample includes 25 IV-semester B.Ed. students were recruited from four teacher education institutions (CSSM College (University of Mumbai), Department of Education (University of Delhi), Awadh Institute of Education (GGSIPU), and Regional Institute of Education (Ajmer)). The selection of these institutions was guided by three considerations: i) Representation of institutional diversity (central university, state university, private institute, and NCERT/RIE system). ii) Accessibility through digital platforms, enabling data collection across states. iii) Variation in internship organisation, providing opportunities to examine differences in school placements, supervision quality, and institutional support. The relatively small sample size is acknowledged as a limitation of the study, affecting the generalizability of the findings.

Development and Validation of the Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was designed for the study, comprising 10 closed-ended items measured on a 5-point Likert scale and one open-ended item capturing perspectives on the usefulness, challenges, institutional support, and supervisor involvement during internship. The instrument was developed by following a review of internship frameworks i.e. (NCTE, 2014; NCTE, 2010) and related empirical studies. To ensure clarity and content validity, a pilot test was conducted with three B.Ed. students (participants) who had recently completed their internship. Based on feedback, necessary modifications were made, and the final version of the tool was validated by a subject expert.

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

Data were collected digitally using Google Forms to facilitate participation from students residing in different areas. The form link was given individually, and participants were given information about the purpose of the study's and anonymity. Participation was voluntary.

The analysis followed a mixed-methods interpretive approach. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, primarily percentage analysis, to identify patterns in student responses. These findings were visually represented using bar graphs. For Qualitative data Responses to the open-ended question were analysed using thematic analysis. Initial coding identified recurring ideas related to challenges, variations in school engagement, documentation tasks, and disparities in supervision. Codes were then grouped into themes such as "inconsistent exposure to administrative work," "variability in mentor involvement," and "differences across school environments." Further findings from both datasets were integrated through triangulation, enabling explanations for statistical trends.

Data Analysis:

The interpretation and key findings derived from the prospective teachers' responses, focusing on five major themes that emerged from the data: (1) perceived effectiveness of the School Internship Programme (SIP), (2) development of teaching competencies, (3) institutional facilitation, (4) supervisory guidance, and (5) engagement and support from host schools. The quantitative analysis is based on the overview of general trends, while the qualitative narratives help contextualise variations and reveal institutional-level differences. The integration of both datasets allows for a comprehensive understanding of how prospective teachers experienced the School Internship Programmes.

The effectiveness and usefulness of school internship programmes.

The responses from prospective teachers provided valuable insights into their experiences with the School Internship Programme (SIP), highlighting its multifaceted impact on their professional development. The data, visually represented through bar graphs, illustrate

diverse perceptions regarding the effectiveness and implementation of the internship. These themes were further examined using qualitative interpretation, enabling a more nuanced understanding of how student-teachers engaged with various components of the programme (Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983). This mixed-method analysis sheds light on both the strengths and the challenges encountered during the SIP across institutional and classroom settings.

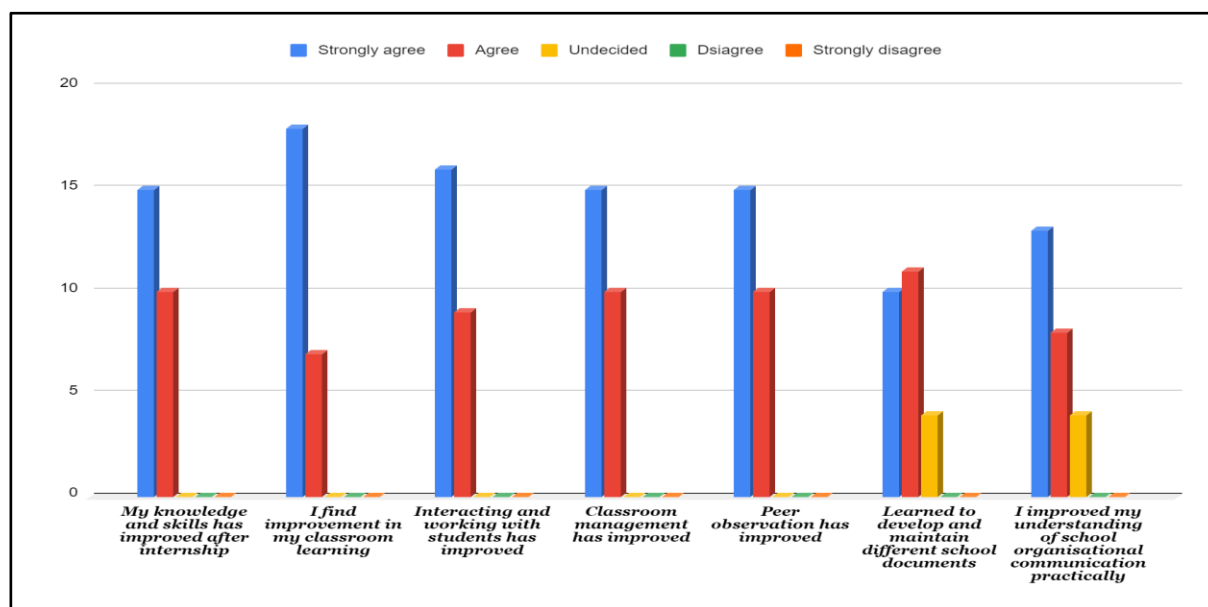


Figure 1. Effectiveness and Usefulness of School Internship Programmes

The analysis of the first statement indicates that 55% of the prospective teachers strongly agreed and 45% agreed that their knowledge and skills improved following the internship. This reflects a general consensus that the internship activities significantly contributed to their professional growth. In response to the second statement, 73.7% of participants strongly agreed and 26.3% agreed that their classroom learning had improved, suggesting that the internship positively influenced their instructional practices and academic engagement (Zeichner, 2010). For the third statement, 68.4% strongly agreed and 31.6% agreed that their ability to interact and work with students had enhanced, highlighting the programme's role in fostering effective student engagement. Similarly, the fourth and fifth statements pertaining to classroom management and peer observation received strong agreement from 63.2% and agreement from 36.8%, indicating substantial development in these domains as well. However, responses to the sixth statement, "*I learned to develop and maintain different school documents*", showed a more varied pattern, while 42.1% either strongly agreed or agreed, 10.5% remained undecided, and 5.3% disagreed, suggesting that exposure to administrative tasks was inconsistent across the internship.

The “inconsistent exposure to administrative work” These responses revealed notable variations in exposure to administrative and documentation tasks as some of the participants noted that

“Documentation work was mostly done by permanent teachers, so interns were not allowed to handle it.” Others noted that

“Schools focused on teaching but did not involve us in maintaining school records.” This explains the relatively mixed responses to the statement on documentation skills.

Finally, regarding school organizational communication, 52.6% strongly agreed and 36.8% agreed that their understanding had improved, while 10.5% were undecided. These responses underscore the internship’s overall effectiveness in strengthening core teaching competencies, although certain areas, such as documentation, may require greater emphasis in future programme planning (Hammond, 2006).

Effect of school internship programmes in improving teaching standards.

Internship programmes provide aspiring teachers with the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have acquired in their teacher training programmes (Purba et al., 2025). By actively engaging in classroom teaching, interns can bridge the gap between theory and practice, gaining a deeper understanding of instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and assessment methods (Adams et al., 2020). This practical application helps interns develop a strong foundation of teaching skills and knowledge.

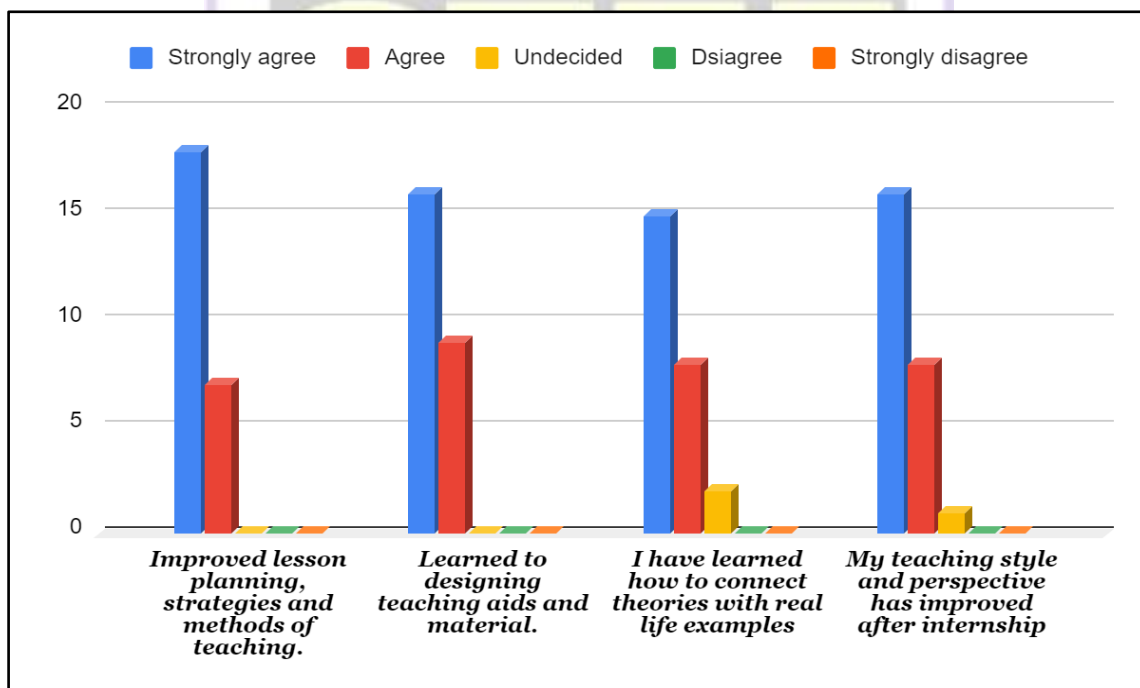


Figure 2. Effect of School Internship Programmes on Improving Teaching Standards

The second bar graph illustrates that 65% of trainee teachers strongly agreed and 35% agreed that their participation in the School Internship Programme (SIP) enhanced their lesson planning and instructional strategies. Similarly, 63.2% strongly agreed and 36.8% agreed that they acquired the ability to design varied and effective teaching aids, underscoring the programme's impact on instructional material development. In response to the third item, which evaluated the ability to relate subject content to real-life contexts, 57.9% of respondents strongly agreed, 31.6% agreed, while 10.5% were undecided. This suggests that a significant majority of trainees developed the competence to contextualise academic content through practical examples, a critical indicator of pedagogical effectiveness.

Regarding the improvement of overall teaching style, 63.2% strongly agreed and 31.6% agreed, while a small portion (5.3%) remained undecided. Yet some of the prospective teachers reported limited autonomy in experimenting with instructional strategies, especially in conventional or examination-focused schools. A few students mentioned that large class sizes limited their ability to try activity-based methods. For instance, one participant stated:

"I wanted to use group activities, but the mentor teacher insisted on lecture-based teaching due to time constraints."

These contrasting experiences indicate that while the internship generally enhanced teaching skills, the extent of skill application was influenced by school culture, class size, and mentor teacher attitudes. These findings collectively highlight the SIP's contribution to enhancing pedagogical proficiency and teaching standards among prospective teachers. These outcomes align with recent findings that underscore the role of field-based experiences in promoting reflective practice and skill integration in teacher education (Chikumbu & Chigona, 2023).

Teacher training institute's role in making the internship programme effective

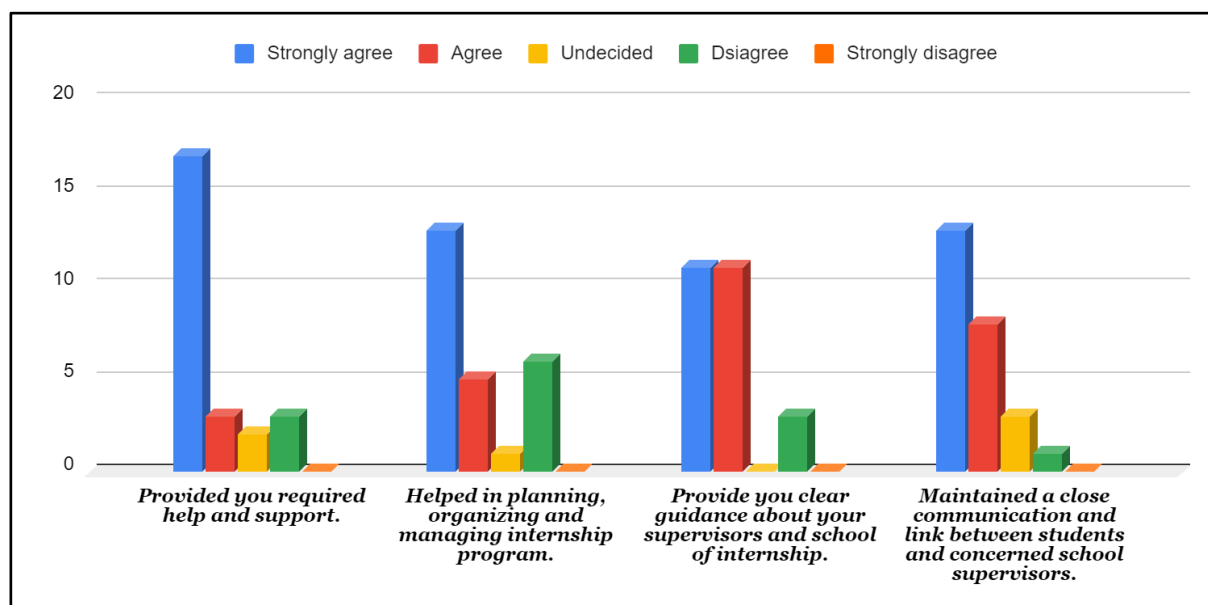


Figure 3. Teacher Training Institute's Role in Making Internship Programmes Effective

The third bar graph highlights prospective teachers' perceptions of institutional support during the School Internship Programme (SIP). For the first statement regarding whether the teacher training institute provided the necessary help and support, 55% of respondents indicated strong agreement, while a smaller proportion expressed mixed or neutral responses. Regarding the institute's role in planning, organising, and managing the internship, 52.6% of participants strongly agreed, 21.1% agreed, 5.3% were uncertain, and 21.1% expressed moderate disagreement. These findings suggest that while a majority recognised the institutional efforts in logistical coordination, a notable fraction perceived inconsistencies in implementation.

A notable nuance emerging from the data is the variability in how different institutions operationalised internship-related responsibilities. Some prospective teachers reported *"receiving a detailed, structured orientation that clearly outlined timelines, documentation procedures, school expectations, and communication protocols"*.

In contrast, others shared that *"our institute offered minimal briefing, with directions provided informally or at the last moment"*. These outlier cases highlight that the quality of pre-internship preparation is uneven across teacher education institutions.

The reasons behind these inconsistencies appear to be rooted in institutional differences such as staff capacity, administrative culture, availability of a dedicated internship coordinator, and adherence to NCTE (2014) guidelines. Well-resourced institutions tended to have systematic

planning mechanisms, whereas less-resourced or overstretched institutions struggled to maintain consistent structures. Such disparities underscore how institutional readiness and not just intention significantly shapes the quality of support experienced by interns.

In response to the third statement, which addressed the clarity of guidance regarding supervisors and host schools, 42.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, whereas 15.8% disagreed. This indicates variability in communication and orientation practices across institutions.

Lastly, most participants affirmed that their teacher training institute maintained effective communication with school supervisors, facilitating coordination and feedback mechanisms. These findings underscore the critical role of institutional support in enhancing the coherence and effectiveness of internship experiences, a factor consistently highlighted in contemporary research (Mudzielwana & Maphosa, 2022).

The role of the supervisor during Internship programmes

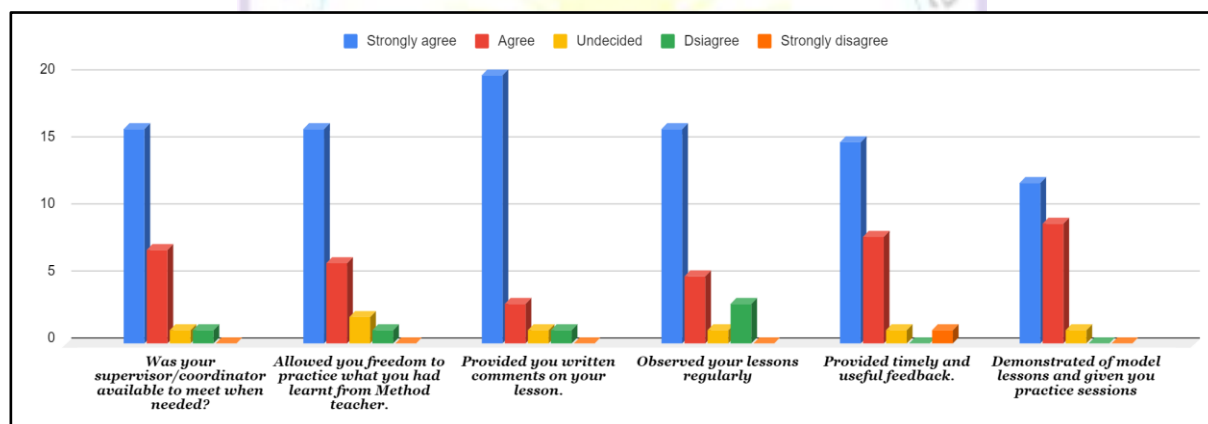


Figure 4. Role of the supervisor during Internship programmes

The data presented in the fourth bar graph emphasizes the critical role of supervisors during the School Internship Programme (SIP). A substantial majority (65%) of prospective teachers strongly agreed, and 25% agreed, that their supervisor or coordinator was available to provide support when needed. Only a small percentage (5%) were either undecided or disagreed, indicating overall satisfaction with supervisory accessibility.

Furthermore, 63.2% of respondents strongly agreed that supervisors granted them autonomy to implement instructional strategies learned from their method teachers, while 10% were

undecided and 5% disagreed. This level of professional freedom is essential for developing confidence and independent teaching capabilities.

Responses to the third and fourth items show that most participants acknowledged receiving regular written feedback on their lesson delivery and confirmed that supervisors demonstrated model lessons and conducted practice teaching sessions. These practices are crucial in guiding reflection and refining pedagogical skills.

However, contrasting cases emerged in which a few prospective teachers reported very limited supervisory engagement. For instance, some participants stated that *“their supervisors rarely visited the school, interacted only through phone calls or WhatsApp messages, or provided general comments rather than specific written feedback”*. These outlier experiences stand in sharp contrast to the majority who benefited from regular and structured support.

Such inconsistencies appear to be influenced by several factors, including supervisors' workload, the number of interns assigned to each faculty member, and variations in institutional policies on monitoring field practice. In some TEIs, supervisors were responsible for multiple schools scattered across different locations, reducing the frequency and quality of their visits. In other cases, academic schedules, examination duties, or administrative responsibilities limited the time supervisors could devote to individual interns.

Overall, the findings suggest that the presence of engaged, communicative, and supportive supervisors significantly enhanced the internship experience. Such mentorship fosters reflective practice and skill development critical components of effective teacher preparation, as supported by recent studies in the field (Koc & Yildirim, 2022).

The data on school roles during the internship programmes

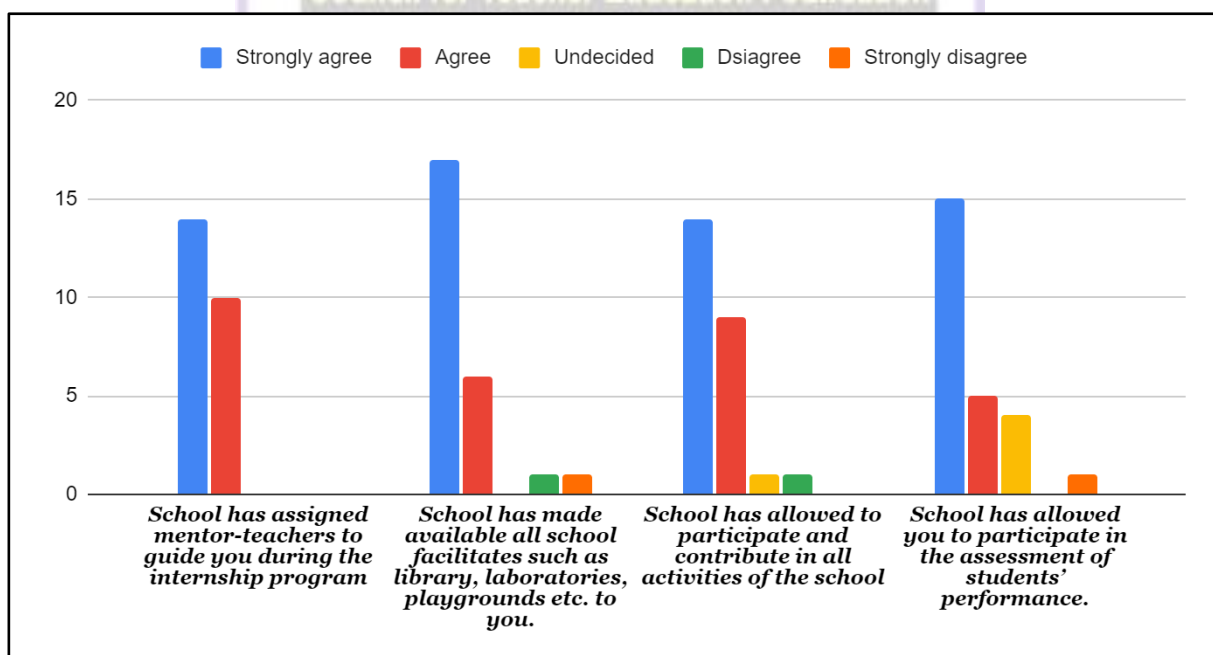


Figure 5. School Roles During the Internship Programmes

The data in the fifth bar graph highlight the extent of school-level engagement and support provided to prospective teachers during the School Internship Programme (SIP). A significant majority of respondents acknowledged that mentor teachers were assigned to guide and support them throughout their internship, which played a pivotal role in shaping their classroom practice and confidence. Additionally, participants affirmed that essential facilities such as libraries, laboratories, and playgrounds were made available, creating an enabling environment for both academic and co-curricular engagement. Regarding integration into school activities, 52.6% of respondents strongly agreed and 36.8% partially agreed that they were actively involved in various school functions and initiatives. This reflects a generally inclusive approach by host schools in facilitating professional socialisation and experiential learning.

However, responses to the final item, which addressed the opportunity to participate in the assessment of students' performance, were mixed. A notable portion of participants remained undecided or expressed only partial agreement, indicating inconsistent involvement in this critical aspect of the teaching-learning process.

A contrasting pattern emerged from qualitative responses in which some prospective teachers reported *“we got extensive opportunities to assist with checking notebooks, preparing question papers, conducting formative assessments, and entering marks into registers”*. In contrast, others noted that *“we were completely excluded from assessment-related responsibilities due to school policies or mentor teacher preferences.”* These outlier cases demonstrate the uneven nature of assessment exposure across different schools. The reasons behind these inconsistencies appear to be linked to school-level administrative protocols, the timing of internship cycles relative to examination schedules, and concerns about accountability in evaluation procedures. Some schools were hesitant to assign assessment tasks to interns due to fear of errors or institutional norms that restrict non-permanent staff from handling official records. In other cases, teachers themselves were overburdened or lacked clarity about the scope of tasks permissible for interns, leading to minimal delegation. These contextual factors explain why some student-teachers gained substantial hands-on experience while others had limited or no involvement in assessment activities.

This suggests a need for more structured and inclusive practices to ensure comprehensive training during internship placements. These findings are consistent with recent research emphasizing the importance of full school immersion and structured mentoring to maximize

the impact of internship programmes on pre-service teacher development (Nir & Aloni, 2021).

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study affirm the pivotal role of school internship programmes in bridging the gap between theoretical training and real-world teaching practice. Prospective teachers reported that the internship experience provided critical exposure to the operational dynamics of school environments (Fielder, 2023). This hands-on engagement allowed them to apply pedagogical theories in authentic classroom settings, enhance their lesson planning skills, and refine instructional strategies. In particular, many prospective teachers demonstrated improved capabilities in classroom management, student engagement, and the delivery of subject content key competencies for professional teachers.

Moreover, the internship experience facilitated reflective practice, enabling trainees to evaluate their teaching approaches and receive constructive feedback from mentors and supervisors. This reflective process fostered professional growth and encouraged the development of adaptive teaching techniques tailored to diverse learner needs. The programme's design also promoted peer learning, with student-teachers gaining insights by observing and critically analyzing one another's lessons. The overall satisfaction expressed by the majority of participants underscores the internship programme's effectiveness. Respondents consistently acknowledged the supportive role of school mentors, institutional coordinators, and the structured nature of the internship programme. Such support mechanisms contributed to a positive learning environment that encouraged experimentation, dialogue, and professional identity formation. These outcomes align with contemporary research emphasizing the importance of immersive, mentorship-based field experiences in teacher education. Studies show that high-quality internship programmes significantly improve pre-service teachers' readiness for the classroom by fostering critical thinking, pedagogical adaptability, and self-efficacy (Torrance & Forde, 2022).

However, the deeper data reveals crucial variations in experiences across different institutions and supervisors. Prospective teachers from sufficient resourced institutions, such as central universities and RIEs, reported more structured planning, clear guidelines, and more consistent supervisor's engagement. Whereas, those from private institutions frequently experienced irregular supervision, delay in communication, or even limited pre-internship orientation. These institutional differences suggest that the effectiveness of school internship programme implementation is not uniform but are influenced by institutional capacity, faculty workload, and the administrative culture as well. Similarly, the school level differences also

shaped the quality of learning opportunities. Some of the schools actively involved interns in lesson planning, co-curricular activities, and student assessment, whereas others restricted their involvement due to accountability concerns, ongoing examination cycles, or a lack of clarity about the responsibilities that might be delegated to interns. As a result, areas such as documentation work and assessment exposure emerged as weak components due to inconsistent access and differing expectations among the host schools. Kolb's Experiential Learning theory, which emphasizes that learning arises from the quality of events rather than their simple occurrence, is consistent with this variety of experiences. Richer cycles of concrete experience, contemplative observation, abstract conceptualization, and active exploration were encountered by interns assigned to more encouraging schools. On the other hand, people with limited supervision had an unfinished learning cycle, which hindered their chances to advance their careers. Participants also expressed opposing viewpoints. A few said they felt limited by standard teaching expectations or had little opportunity to use creative methods, despite the fact that many valued the liberty granted by supervisors. While some received merely vague remarks or infrequent monitoring, others valued in-depth criticism. These disparate experiences show that, despite SIP's widespread acceptance, the ecosystem's implementation quality differs greatly.

While the programme was largely effective, the findings also highlight areas needing further attention, such as inconsistent exposure to student assessments and administrative responsibilities in some schools. These gaps point to the need for clearer institutional guidelines, structured collaboration between teacher education institutions and schools, and better alignment with national teacher education standards. They also reflect the broader debates in Indian teacher education regarding the uneven operationalization of field engagement requirements mandated by NCTE (2014) and emphasized in NEP 2020. Addressing these gaps through clearer institutional guidelines and stronger school-institute collaboration could enhance the comprehensiveness of future internships. The School Internship Programme proved instrumental in developing the professional competencies of prospective teachers. With appropriate guidance and consistent institutional and supervisory support, student-teachers were able to translate theory into practice, develop core teaching skills, and enter the profession with increased confidence and preparedness.

Implication

This study's findings have significant implications for the design and execution of School Internship Programs in teacher education institutions. The programme's overall efficacy underscores the importance of organized field participation and the necessity for cohesive

teamwork among teacher education institutes (TEIs), supervisors, and host schools. Teacher education institutions should align internship practices with NCTE (2014) and NEP 2020, ensuring structured mentoring, clearer role definitions, and competency-based training. Strengthening school with teacher education institutions collaboration through formal partnership agreements can reduce inconsistencies in supervision, assessment exposure, and documentation work. Standardized supervision frameworks, including planned observations and written feedback, are essential for improving mentoring quality. Schools must adopt inclusive practices by actively involving interns in assessment and administrative responsibilities. Overall, the findings of this study underline the need for enhanced teamwork, policy-aligned planning, and consistent supervisory participation to fully fulfill the promise of internship programmes in training future teachers.

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