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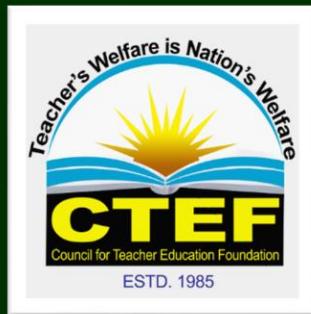
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Alternative Modalities of Internship in Teaching During Covid-19 Pandemic Period: A SWOC Analysis

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on traditional internship opportunities across all industries, including education. Different forms of internships arose as a result, offering chances for professional growth and hands-on experience. This research paper focuses on the various alternative internship strategies implemented by the Regional Institute of Education (RIE) Bhopal during the pandemic, analysing their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. The population of this study consisted of all teacher educators and student teachers participating in the 3-year integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. program and the 4-year integrated B.A./B.Sc.-B.Ed. program at RIE Bhopal. A descriptive survey method was employed to perform the research. A Google Form made especially for the research project was used to gather the data. The results show that RIE Bhopal used five different internship modalities during the COVID-19 pandemic: peer group (IPG), online internship (OI), in-community internship (IC), internship with children with special needs (ICWSN), and internship in nearby schools with COVID-19 protocols (INS). According to the study's overall findings, these alternate forms of internships have the ability to help students with COVID-19-related issues while still offering flexible and worthwhile learning opportunities during and after the epidemic.

Key Words: *Internship, Alternative Modalities, COVID-19 Pandemic, SWOC Analysis*

Introduction

An internship is a work-based learning experience where an individual, i.e. student or a trainee works in a professional setting, often for a specified period of time, to gain practical

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skills, and exposure in his/her selected field. Internships offer an opportunity to the intern to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical setting, explore and learn new skills under the guidance of professionals, and achieve a better understanding of the work environment.

Internship is the essential component of the teacher education programme for imparting professional skills and competencies in the teacher-internees. A well-designed, well-executed internship program benefits not only the interns but also the participating and cooperating institutions (the universities/colleges and the practice schools), the staff, and the students. The school functions as the interns' laboratory. Consequently, this gives the cooperating school's teachers the chance to advance their pedagogical and supervisory abilities. The cooperating teachers also interact with the participating teacher education institution's teacher education specialists. This gives the school's curriculum fresh ideas for improvement. The internship gives the interns the chance to learn new tactics, enhance existing techniques, and obtain resources for efficient instruction. Due to physical distancing measures and the inability of many workplaces to operate in offline mode, the COVID-19 epidemic had a substantial impact on internships. Though the COVID-19 pandemic affected entire education system at all levels yet higher or university education may be considered as the most affected level since it requires highly specialized and time bound efforts. The global higher education system has responded to COVID-19 in a variety of ways as it has affected higher education worldwide. In order to create online courses, a few Australian universities, like Monash University and Victoria University, have temporarily suspended their normal classes. Universities such as the University of Queensland carried on with in-person instruction using physical distance protocol and online recordings at the same time (Crawford et al., 2020). All Chinese colleges and institutions were closed for the Lunar New Year, and they were scheduled to reopen on January 31 of the following year. On January 26, 2020, it was announced that the spring semester will be postponed. On January 28, 2020, China's Ministry of Education said that this will apply to all national institutions, colleges, and standardized tests such as the GRE, GMAT, TOEFL, and IELTS (Crawford et al., 2020). Following the University Grants Commission's (UGC) declaration on March 19, 2020, that exams in all universities would be postponed till the end of March, all academic activities in India were suspended. All state and central universities made the announcement to close their campuses and cease all offline academic operations. COVID 19 Pandemic, lock down was implemented in the entire country after March 20, 2020, and schools were closed, therefore it was impossible to organize the internship programme with the previous approaches and strategies. Hence, various adaptations were done by RIE Bhopal in Internship Programme for their

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Teacher-Interns. These adaptations were the need of the hour but also arose few questions given below. For answering these questions, researcher conducted the present study.

Research questions:

1. What strategies have been adopted by RIE Bhopal for internship of pupil teachers in response to Covid-19?
2. Are these strategies successfully support to attain the desired goals of the programme?
3. What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats does the instant move to online learning bring?

Objectives of the study:

1. To identify various strategies adopted by RIE Bhopal for internship of pupil teacher in response to Covid-19.
2. To analyse strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and Challenges to the Adaptations in Internship programme at RIE Bhopal.

Design of study

The design of the present study is Descriptive Survey. In the study the Adaptations to internship programme for future teachers in the era of COVID-19 pandemic situation were investigated by applying self-made tools i.e. Questionnaires. The tools were administered on Teacher-Educators and Teacher Internees of class B.Sc.-B.Ed. /B.A.-B.Ed. and Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. through Google form.

Population

The population of the present study is the all Teacher Educators and pupil teachers of 3 year integrated B.Ed. M.Ed. programme and 4 year integrated B.A./ B.Sc. -B.Ed. programme of RIE- Bhopal.

Sample

The purposive sampling procedure was taken as the sampling procedure. The 148 teacher educators and teacher internees of RIE, Bhopal were the sample and out of these 112 were the respondent sample as shown in table 1

Table 1 Sample of the study

| Sr. | Sample | |
|-----|------------|-----------|
| | Approached | Responded |
| | | |

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| | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Teacher Educators | 22 | 16 |
| 2 | Teacher Internees of 3- | | |
| | Year Integrated B.Ed. | 46 | 43 |
| | M.Ed. | | |
| 3 | Teacher Internees of 4- | | |
| | Year Integrated | 80 | 53 |
| | B.A./B.Sc. B.Ed. | | |
| | Total | 148 | 112 |

Tool

Self-made Questionnaires were developed by the researcher for data collection in this present study. Questionnaires converted in Google form were sent through WhatsApp or Gmail to the sample selected.

Analysis and Findings:

- Identification of various strategies adopted by RIE Bhopal for internship of teacher interns in response to Covid-19:**

On the basis of data collected from the teacher internees of RIE Bhopal, following 5 alternative modalities of internship were identified -

1. Online Internship (OI)
2. Internship in Community (IC)
3. Internship with Peer Group (IPG)
4. Internship with Children with Special Needs (ICWSN)
5. Internship in Nearby School with COVID-19 Protocol (INS)

1. Online Internship (OI): In COVID 19 pandemic, most of the schools were not able to organize classes for their students in the face-to-face mode, they were organizing classes in virtual or online mode. Realizing the scenario, RIE Bhopal provided opportunities to their teacher internees to join such schools like KVS, NVS and other state government schools where online classes were being conducted during COVID 19 pandemic.

2. Internship in Community (IC): Under this modality, internees completed their internship with the support of community. By the help of community members internees constituted a group of students like a class. They conducted all internship activities with that group.

3. Internship with Peer Group (IPG): Those internees, who were not able to get schools for entire duration of internship, were allowed to conduct internship activities in peer group.

4. Internship with Children with Special Needs (ICWSN): Under this modality, internees were allowed to conduct internship activities with the children with special needs.

5. Internship in Nearby School (INS): Internees belong to such states or UTs or such areas where schools were functioning with COVID-19 protocol were allowed to complete their internship in such a school.

Table 2: Percentage of Internees Practiced Various Models of Internship

| S. No. | Modality of Internship | Percentage of Internees completed internship through modality |
|--------|--|---|
| 1 | Online Internship (OI) | 94.79% |
| 2 | Internship in Community (IC) | 2.08% |
| 3 | Internship with Peer Group (IPG) | 1.04% |
| 4 | Internship with Children with Special Needs (ICWSN) | 1.04% |
| 5 | Internship in Nearby School with COVID-19 Protocol (INS) | 1.04% |

The results show that a very high percentage of teacher internees (94.79%) chose online modality. The percentage of teacher internees who chose Internship in Community teaching is 2.08%. The percentage of teacher internees who chose the rest three models is negligible (1.04% for each category).

Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) Analysis of alternative modalities of internship in teaching during covid-19 pandemic period:

This section is devoted to presentation of results pertaining to Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) of alternative modalities of internship adapted by RIE Bhopal during COVID 19 Pandemic period. In this connection the data collected from the teacher educators and teacher internees are analysed and summary of the results is presented as follows-

Key Strengths:

- Promotes the skills of innovations in an emergency situation like COVID 19 Pandemic.
- Fulfilled the course objectives without compromising the quality of internship programme.

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- All the teaching learning skills expected from the teacher internees are acquired through various alternative modes.
- Promotion of the skills of integrating ICT in teaching learning process amongst the teacher internees.
- Promotion of the habit of self –learning amongst the teacher internees.
- Promotion of the habit of taking the onus of learning skills of internship amongst the teacher internees.
- Provided freedom to the internees to choose from among the list of alternatives.
- Promotion of 4 C skills of 21st Century like Creativity, Critical Thinking, Communication and Collaboration amongst the teacher internees through internship.
- Provided opportunity to different categories of learners, based on locale, Socio economic background and disability, to do internship at their convenience.
- Economically viable: the internees could save time, money and labour.

Major Weaknesses

- The internees missed face to face social interaction with learners, supervisors, mentor teachers and their fellow internees.
- Problems resulted due to lack of preparedness amongst the teacher internees and teacher educators, cooperating schools and the teacher education institution.
- Inadequate knowledge of internees, supervisors and mentor teachers about different digital platforms for online internship.
- Problem of electric facility and internet connectivity at the end of school, teacher internees and/or supervisors.
- Lack of authentic teaching learning environments.
- Difficulty in the completion of some important components of internship, e.g. action research and case study, effectively.
- Internees lacked promotion of some basic skills of teaching learning, e.g. use of blackboard, hand on activities, experimentation.

Opportunities

- Bringing about innovation in an emergency situation like COVID 19 pandemic.
- Promotion of ability to face similar challenges in future
- Promotion of the skills of using different digital platforms.

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- Transfer of learning of ICT skills to other areas of human activity e.g. online banking, booking of tickets, attending seminar and conferences, communication with others.
- Helps pursuing different courses through blended approach.
- Provides opportunities for career progression by pursuing MOOCs and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programmes.

Challenges

Interruption in internship activities as a result of unstable/poor internet connectivity.

- support from cooperating schools/community
- Health and emotional well-being of learners.
- Learning of selected components of the internship e.g. Action Research and Case Study etc.
- Availability of electronic gazettes and sufficient internet data with the learners.

Conclusion

The Regional Institute of Education (RIE) in Bhopal has adopted alternative modalities of internship that have proven to be effective in enhancing the quality of education. These modalities, which include online Internship (OI), Internship in Community (IC), Internship with Peer Group (IPG), Internship with Children with Special Needs (ICWSN) and Internship in Nearby School with COVID-19 Protocol (INS) during COVID 19 Pandemic have allowed students to learn at their own pace and engage with the material in meaningful ways. while the alternative modalities of internship adopted by RIE Bhopal have their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, they provide students with valuable practical experience and the opportunity to develop professional skills. With careful planning and ongoing evaluation, these modalities have the potential to enhance the internship experience for students and prepare them for successful careers in their chosen fields.

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