



ISSN - OLD-2231-3613, NEW-2455-8729
International Educational Journal

UGC APPROVAL NO. - 42652

CHETANA

Received on 15th July 2017, Revised on 20th July 2017; Accepted 20th July 2017

ARTICLE

The School Internship Programme (SIP) of Two Year B.Ed. Course: Misconstruction, Mismanagement, and Agenda for Reformation

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Key words: *NCTE, B.Ed. course, school internship(SIP), misconstruction, mismanagement, Universities, teacher education institutes, educators, school system, real issues, evaluation, remedies, metamorphosis, transformation, reformation, etc.*

(A) The Prologue

It is generally observed across the globe that teacher education involves both theory and practice components. During the Internship programme, a student-teacher intern is expected to:

1. develop the required teaching skills,
2. gain the desired knowledge and experience of pedagogy in school,
3. get on -the -job -training,
4. develop the skill of integrating the theoretical knowledge of teacher education with the practice of teacher education,
5. to know and use assessment tools,
6. to understand the school as a system, and,
7. to develop self as a professional worker, etc.

As per the NCTE norms and standards 2014, every teacher education institute offering a two year B.Ed. course is required to conduct a 20 weeks' school internship programme (SIP) under the semester scheme for B.Ed. students out of which a 2 week' programme is to be conducted under supervision of teacher educators, and the remaining 18 week' programme is to be conducted in schools.

According to the NCTE guidelines, the SIP has been conducted in approximately 1.5 lakh schools by 16000 teacher education institutes across the country this year.

Let us discuss the above mentioned SIP in the light of the following pertinent questions:

1. How is the encrypted SIP programme being practically conducted?

- a) *How have the universities followed the NCTE guidelines for designing the SIP?*
- b) *How have the teacher education institutes followed the NCTE guidelines for conducting the SIP?*
- c) *How have the school dept. followed the NCTE guidelines for conducting the SIP?*
- d) *How have the schools followed the NCTE guidelines for conducting the SIP?*

2. What are the real issues involved in conducting SIP?

3. How can the SIP be improved?

(B) The Bitter Truth:

Based on the practical observations, field experience and the students' feedback, the following shocking phenomena emerge:

1. Due to lack of adequate and clear-cut detailed guidelines from the NCTE, a majority of universities have deviously conceptualized and designed the SIP in various ways including the arbitrary splitting up of 20 weeks' SIP, no mandatory scope for 'school experience' in 20 % private schools, neglect of two weeks' community engagement, etc. and thus they have openly violated the NCTE guidelines for SIP by avoiding the provision of chalking out a plan for monitoring and supervision, and also by incorporating the provision of external assessment of SIP, etc.
2. With scant regard for the NCTE, the school dept. has knowingly or unknowingly defeated the basic purpose of convertible SIP by treating the trainee-teachers as 'trained, and paid teachers', and by not providing a 'mentor' as required under the so-called guidelines of the NCTE. Further, the school dept. has calculatedly treated them as their 'employees' without paying them even a single penny (rupee) as stipend. As a result of all this, the District Education Officers (DEOs) immediately 'seized' this as a god-send and a golden opportunity to meet the long-pending demand of the schools for supplying the required teachers in their schools for 'covering' the 'course' for their students. Consequently, the responsibility and accountability of the serving teachers has been subtly shifted to the 'trainee teachers'. Internship schools have generally not been available to TEIs, faculty, students throughout the year as desired by the NCTE. No criteria for school allotment have been prepared. Even the general criteria such as distance from TEIs, residence, and accessibility have been generally flouted.
3. The govt. schools are absolutely delighted with this SIP because of various reasons including the sudden and abundant supply of teachers who have been made responsible for various

teaching and non-teaching duties and are to be accountable for any poor performance of the school-students in the annual exams.

4. In the current fallible model of SIP, practically no 'mentor' is generally appointed by the school for the trainee-teachers. What is worse is that no teacher educator (trainer) is available for academic and pedagogic guidance to the trainee teachers. Since the trainee -teachers are 'placed' (posted?) in the school near their 'home ', but far-off from the training institute, no academic and professional guidance is available to the trainee- teachers. Due to the lack of essential and vital guidance, it is guessed that barring a few exceptions, a majority of trainee-teachers may have generally 'acquired' the following negative habits /skills/trends:

- 1) *how to teach without 'academic and professional guidance' from the subject -expert teacher educator.*
- 2) *how to avoid teaching under one pretext or the other .*
- 3) *how to 'pass' time due to lack of 'monitoring' by the training institute.*
- 4) *how to quickly 'unlearn' or' get rid of ' the teaching skills acquired or developed in the training institute .*
- 5) *how to 'exploit' the system by taking /holding no responsibility and accountability.*
- 6) *how to play in the hand mediocrity ,etc even before becoming 'licensed, approved and certified ' teachers.*
- 7) *how to 'misguide ' the training institutes by submitting to them a ' false and cut-copy -paste ' report on the tasks and activities desired to be conducted during the unconsidered ,unchallenged , unrealized and unworkable SIP.*
- 8) *how to get involved in dishonest practices such as greasing the hands of the succumbing authorities for getting the 'SIP Completion Certificate' .etc.*
- 9) *how to 'dilute' the very spirit of pre- teacher education programme in the name of 'duration'.*
- 10) *how to ' do ' the negative /wrong things which committed teacher educators may have never ever imagined in teacher education.*
- 11) *how to convert the derivative SIP into a mockery .*

5. Unfortunately a majority of the unconcerned and myopic universities have been least bothered about ' how the fragile SIP' is really conducted in the field and they have not taken effective steps to make the evaluation process practically valid and reliable. Consequently the training institutes prepared their own questionable and dubious methods for want of proper guidelines from the university concerned.

6. Generally a majority of universities have made provisions for conducting internal and external viva voce based on the 'records' submitted by the student-teachers. Due to lack of clear cut conceptualization of assessment, the execution of the same has become a complete disaster.
7. Teacher training institutes too have been elated at the above mentioned developments because of the following reasons:
 - 1) the faculty members of the training institutes are completely relieved of the taxing 'duty' of providing 'guidance' to the trainee -teachers.
 - 2) the training institutes need not engage the 'unnecessary faculty' members when only three or four faculty members can 'handle' 100 B.Ed. students of the First Year batch in the absence of 100 Second Year students who are actually in the field (the schools near students' home) .Thus, the training institutes are luckily in a position to 'save' money and thus 'need not worry' about making seating arrangements for 200 students at a time due to lack of adequate infrastructure in the institutes.
8. The dismayed and uncomplaining trainee-teachers may also be more than happy in the present situation because they were /are 'near home' in the existing model of unfocussed SIP. Evidently, their expenditure during uninspiring SIP is substantially cut down/ minimized by being 'at home'.
9. The society too may also be pleased because the children (school - students) of parents have got 'good, new, trained, young, energetic and politically 'unpolluted' teachers.
10. Everybody seems to be very happy and satisfied with the current scenario and 'comfortable arrangements' except a few genuinely concerned individuals including 'sensitive ,dedicated teacher educators who unfortunately feel voiceless and are in minority.

(C) The Desirable Remedies:

In order to save quality of teacher education in the face of the above mentioned horrible , harsh and bitter reality of SIP , the following corrective measures may/ should be academically contemplated and seriously considered:

- 1) First of all, the NCTE must be prevented from interfering with the university-autonomy which is legally granted by the UGC Act.
- 2) Each university must redesign its B.Ed. programme including clear -cut provisions and detailed guidelines for conducting the SIP, for its effective monitoring, and for its evaluation, etc. in the light of the following suggestions;
 - a) The university concerned should build up consensus among its affiliated colleges on the uniformity of the shape and spirit of the SIP across the state universities.

The 20 weeks school internship programme should be reorganized. It should be conducted under the daily and regular supervision of the faculty of the training institute because it would enhance the quality of teacher training and provide required feedback to the trainee teachers. The SIP should be conducted as suggested below:

S. No.	B.Ed Class	Phase	Internship Activity	Duration (week/s)	Max.Marks	Type/ Method of Evaluation
1.	First year/ Sem-1	1-Phase	School observation	1 week (Under supervision of teacher educators)	10	Internal Exams,etc.
2.	First year/ Sem-2	2-Phase	First round of Teaching Practice- (6 * 3= 18 days),18 lessons in teaching subject-1 only	3 weeks (under supervision of teacher educators)	70	
3.	First year/ Sem-2	3-Phase	Second round of Teaching Practice- (6 * 3 = 18 days),18 lessons in teaching -subject-1 only .	3 weeks (under supervision of teacher educators)	70	
4.	Second year/ Sem-4* (* Sem -3 for theory - work only)	4-Phase	Block Teaching /School-Internship	11 weeks (under supervision of teacher educators)	120	Internal Exams/Viva, etc. by the faculty.
5.	Second year/Sem-4	5-Phase	Community Engagement	2 weeks (under supervision of teacher educators)	30	
6.	Second year/Sem-4	6-Phase	Practical Exam/Final Lessons	(under supervision of teacher educators)	100	External Exam
7. Grand Total	2years/4 semesters	6 phases	-	-	400 Marks	-

- b) The training institute must be made responsible for providing on-the-spot-individual-guidance to the trainee-teachers engaged in SIP which must be conducted in the close vicinity /proximity of the training institute. Further, the training institute must possess full and complete control over the SIP.
- c) Besides the internal assessment, there should be a course of studies /paper carrying 50 or 100 marks for assessing the reflections, and 'the field based experiences 'gained by the trainee -teachers.
- d) An 'ipsative process' should be adopted for assessing the trainee -teachers. (The 'ipsative process' is a type of assessment in which the learner's current level of achievement, skill, knowledge, or understanding is assessed against their own previous level, rather than against fixed criteria or a norm. It can also describe a process of learning in which the same content is covered more than once , but at an increasingly challenging level, as happens within a 'spiral curriculum model' (Page 146, Oxford Dictionary of Education, 2008).The practical implication of this process is that the trainee-teachers who complete the SIP should again be asked to undergo an additional teaching practice phase under the supervision of the subject -expert teacher educators so that their training may be fine-tuned to the optimal level as desired.
- e) As part of the 'impassive process ' the trainee-teachers may be asked (trained) to reflect on the following:
 - I. what they did during the SIP,
 - II. how they did what they did,
 - III. what they really 'learnt',/ 'acquired' ,gained during the SIP,
 - IV. what they abandoned/ unlearned and why,
 - V. what 'problems ' they faced,
 - VI. how they overcame/solved the problems, etc.

Thus, they may be encouraged to offer concrete, specific and practical suggestions for further improvement in the SIP .This is how the constructive , creative ,literary and linguistic skills/ talent of the trainee - teachers may be developed ,enhanced , honed and fine- tuned.

Let it be added here that the above -mentioned whole process should be conducted and completed in a methodical and research based manner .It should not be done just as a 'ritual' or perfunctorily and mechanically. The review of the SIP should be done every succeeding year.

3). The role of the Dept. of School Education must be delimited to issuing 'standing instructions/ orders ' to the 'lab area schools for providing necessary resources and logistics to the trainee- teachers for SIP without unnecessary delay and hindrance .The school dept. must prevent schools from 'exploiting' the trainee -teachers who largely treat them as ' paid workers ' .Additionally, the school dept. should give stipend to the trainee -teachers as an incentive for' regular teaching' in their schools as the dept. evidently saves a huge amount of money under the 'salary head' thanks to the SIP.

4).In addition, the non -compliance of the norms, standards, regulations, laws of the apex bodies, etc. must be seriously viewed and consequently the guilty must be suitably punished.

(D) The Epilogue:

Unfortunately the stakeholders of TE (including NCTE, state govt., universities, TEIs, faculty, students, schools) have generally not played their roles properly and have generally failed to perform their assigned and desired duties as envisioned in the NCTE guidelines for SIP which have largely been violated.

Is this kind of SIP not a fiasco? Is it not high time the TE in the country had the desired metamorphosis and transformation?

A holistic, comprehensive and continuous assessment of the SIP is the need of the hour. A piecemeal, fragmented, segregated, disintegrated, insensitive, self -defeating and self -deprecating approach to teacher education needs to be immediately abandoned for good. Teacher Education Institutes will have to learn to be fully honest and effectively self -regulatory.

Let us always remember what Benjamin Franklin said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

Are we prepared to undo what has been wrongly done?

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