Experiences of Prospective Teachers About Online Teaching Practicum during Covid-19: A Phenomenological Study

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A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to investigate the experiences of prospective teachers about their online teaching practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective was to gain insights into the experiences and understanding of prospective teachers about online teaching practicum during pandemic 19. To accomplish this study, a qualitative approach and a phenomenological research design were employed. The researcher used purposive sampling techniques and all the students of B.Ed (4 years) of the science group and the practicum supervisor of the same group were selected as a sample. After the data collection the data was analyzed through thematic analysis and different provisional and emergent themes were found. The provisional themes of this study were online teaching practicum, first Impression about OTP, fears of OTP, orientation of OTP, interaction with Practicum supervisor, online instructions, experience with Google Classroom, barriers of OTP, skills, and desired goal, planning of OTP, main difference between online teaching practicum and onsite teaching practicum, online instructions, online Training by using gadgets, environment of OTP, and major components i.e. (1)Lesson Planning (2) Peer Feedback (3)Supervisor Feedback (4) Lesson Reflection (5)Teaching Session (6) E-portfolio. The emergent themes of this study were the experience of online practicum, pre-practicum workshops (Onsite), orientations with focal persons as Schools, discussions with cooperative teachers, online practicum training, provided environment, planning of online teaching practicum, action plan, and experience of E-portfolio. This study's finding revealed that while prospective teachers' initial experiences were positive, they encountered difficulties such as internet connectivity issues, limited time to present lesson plans, and utilizing advanced technology. Additionally, prospective teachers faced challenges in providing and receiving feedback. Based on these findings, the major recommendations include increasing the number of online training sessions, providing comprehensive instruction on lesson planning and uses of advanced technology, and revising the mechanisms for online peer feedback.

Keywords: Online Teaching Practicum, Prospective Teachers, Practicum Supervisor, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

During the global COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid spread of the coronavirus, it is crucial to maintain social distancing to combat the virus effectively. This unprecedented situation has put us all at risk, and to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff in academic institutions, digitalized education has become the only viable solution. Universities rely heavily on digital technologies to continue their operations and provide educational support. Consequently, many institutions have opted for online education systems utilizing platforms such as WhatsApp, e-mail, Skype, Zoom, and Google Meet. However, this transition has significantly impacted the education system as most schools and universities were not well-prepared for online teaching methods. Particularly in developing countries like Pakistan, educational institutions face numerous challenges in conducting educational activities during this crisis. Nonetheless, many higher education institutions have made commendable efforts to digitize their courses.

To prevent the further spread of the coronavirus, the government has decided to temporarily close all academic institutions. As reported by Lederman (2020),

due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students and teachers have found themselves in a situation where they are compelled to adapt to the digital learning experience, which is a condensed version of traditional teaching methods. The results of this show that classroom learning was more effective than online learning. Additionally, the students exhibited better academic performance in classroom learning than in online learning, although the difference was not statistically significant. This situation has left limited options for interacting with students, primarily due to internet and connectivity issues. Even the practicum programs for aspiring teachers have been adversely affected. Given the circumstances, the Department of Education at Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) has developed an Online Practicum Program specifically for prospective teachers of the B. Ed program. Practicum is an essential component for building the professional skills of these future educators. Teaching Practicum is mandatory in teacher preparatory institutions that offer pre-service teacher education programs at universities across Pakistan. In the current context, where the education system is rapidly shifting to online platforms, universities need to launch online practicum programs. These programs offer opportunities for prospective teachers to observe and learn how to effectively teach students through online modes. This study aims to explore the experiences of prospective teachers regarding online teaching practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Rationale of the Study

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, the coronavirus spread to various parts of the world, including Pakistan. As a result, the traditional education system underwent a significant transformation, with universities across the country shifting to online classes. The Department of Education, Fatima Jinnah Women University also embraced this change and introduced an online teaching practicum for prospective teachers. Given the circumstances, it becomes crucial to conduct an in-depth study that explores the experiences and perceptions of prospective teachers regarding online teaching practicum.

Understanding the experiences and perspectives of prospective teachers in their first encounter with an online teaching practicum is of utmost importance for improvement. Therefore, employing a phenomenological research design can provide valuable insights into how

these individuals experience and interpret their online teaching practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Patton (1990), phenomenological studies focus on capturing descriptions of people's experiences and how they perceive and interpret those experiences. Adopting a general phenomenological perspective helps emphasize the significance of methods that document the experiences of individuals across the globe. In this particular study, a phenomenological research design is utilized since a specific group of prospective teachers has completed their online teaching practicum for the first time, resulting in a fresh and unique experience for them.

Statement of the Problem

According to Hamaidi (2014), the practicum serves as an essential opportunity for prospective teachers to gain firsthand knowledge of the actual teaching environment, the complexities of the teaching process, and the challenges that may impede the implementation of the school curriculum.

In the current global context, with the widespread impact of the coronavirus, teaching practicum becomes even more crucial for both new and experienced teachers. As the education system has transitioned to online modes, it is imperative to adapt the teaching practicum accordingly. The Department of Education at Fatima Jinnah Women University recognized this need and organized an online teaching practicum for prospective teachers, as it holds great significance for students pursuing a B.Ed. degree. Conducting an online teaching practicum can pose challenges for prospective teachers and the faculty practicum supervisors. The faculty supervisors may face difficulties in utilizing advanced technologies and providing the necessary opportunities for the use of such technologies. Additionally, enhancing the quality of the education system over time requires the implementation of different methods and strategies. However, for prospective teachers, this online teaching practicum represents their initial experience, which can be challenging.

Prospective teachers may encounter various challenges during the online teaching practicum, such as limited opportunities to engage in proper classroom interactions with students they aim to teach and peers behaving as primary and secondary-level students. Given these circumstances, the present study aims to explore the experiences of prospective teachers

regarding their online teaching practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences and understanding of prospective teachers regarding online teaching practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Questions

The research questions of the present study are:

1. What are the experiences and perceptions of prospective teachers regarding online practicum?
2. How does this understanding of the online practicum shape the teaching-learning experiences of prospective teachers?

Significance of Research

This study holds significance due to the crucial role that teaching practicum plays in teacher education programs and the preparation of future educators. The study aims to examine the educational competencies of prospective teachers and their experiences with online teaching practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic. It specifically focuses on the challenges faced by prospective teachers and offers guidance to faculty practicum supervisors to address these challenges effectively.

The study also aims to document the experiences and understanding of prospective teachers, enabling faculty practicum supervisors to develop a new practicum structure. The findings of the study can serve as a resource for other students to excel in their teaching practicum and assist faculty practicum supervisors in overcoming the problems associated with online teaching practicum.

In sum, this study seeks to share the experiences of prospective teachers regarding online teaching practicum. The results will inform faculty practicum supervisors in the education department about the experiences and challenges encountered by prospective teachers during online teaching practicum, prompting them to take suitable steps to address these issues.

Delimitations

Following were the delimitations of the study.

1. The data collection for this study was limited to B.Ed (4 years) students enrolled in the Science subject teaching group in their 6th semester at the Department of Education, Fatimah Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi.
2. The results primarily pertain to the online teaching

practicum specifically focused on the Science subject, conducted at the Department of Education, which provided the online teaching experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching as a Profession

According to Morrison (n.d.), teaching can be defined as the interaction between mature and immature individuals. It involves the process through which a teacher guides students or a group of students to develop advanced skills and knowledge (Nilsen & Albertalli, 2002).

Teaching is viewed as a profession from various perspectives. Hargreaves et al. (2006) conducted a study that included teachers, trainee teachers, and other related groups. They explored the status of the teaching profession, examining characteristics such as different perspectives on status, the definition of high professional status, and perceptions of the teaching profession. The study revealed a significant disparity between the teaching profession and other professions that enjoy high status in terms of rewards, respect, discipline, and control. However, teachers, trainee teachers, and associated groups perceived teaching as a profession that requires extensive training, responsibility, and performance.

Peter and Peter (2011) conducted qualitative research using interviews to explore different perspectives on teacher training courses. The study highlighted issues such as the failure to pursue a required career, the teaching profession as a springboard to other careers, opportunities for professional development, and concerns about low pay and low status. The study recommended that teachers and policymakers consider the context of trainee teachers to reduce resource wastage and provide adequate support.

Babu and Raju (2013) conducted a study to examine the attitudes of prospective teachers towards their profession. The study employed a tool consisting of 60 items divided into seven areas, including professional problems, teacher salaries, job vacancies and workload, teacher-student interactions, teacher perception of management, and professional status of teachers. The results indicated that male and female prospective teachers had different perceptions of the teaching profession. Furthermore, the attitudes towards teaching varied among prospective teachers from different

subject areas. These studies provide insights into the multifaceted nature of teaching as a profession and shed light on the attitudes, perspectives, and challenges faced by prospective teachers.

Teaching Practicum

Teaching practicum is a valuable opportunity for prospective teachers to gain practical insights into the realities of teaching and professional activities in the field of education. In the 21st century, teaching practicum has emerged as a vital component of pre-service teacher education (Haigh & Tuck, 2000). It is a necessary experience for both bachelor's and master's students, allowing them to apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical setting and develop the skills required to become professional educators. During the teaching practicum, prospective teachers explore their roles and responsibilities as class teachers (Andabai, 2010).

Teaching practicum refers to the practical application of teaching principles, techniques, and training in various activities of daily school life (Andabai, 2010). It provides trainee teachers with the opportunity to observe and actively participate in diverse educational activities within a selected cooperating school, under typical school conditions (Koross, 2016).

Although teaching practicum can sometimes be a challenging and demanding experience for prospective teachers, it offers opportunities for the creation of a professional identity and exposure to a variety of complex and essential teaching and learning experiences (Brock & Grady, 1998). However, challenges such as mentor teacher excellence, alignment of teaching themes with practical experiences, and oversight by lecturers can impact the satisfaction and performance of trainee teachers (Renwick & Vize, 1993).

Teaching practicum not only shapes effective class teachers but also contributes to the development of effective schoolteachers (Emerole, 2015; Marais & Meier, 2004). It involves assuming responsibility for directing the learning of a group over some time and providing trainee teachers with a comprehensive understanding of classroom and schoolwork (Emerole, 2015; Marais & Meier, 2004).

In a research article by Petro Marais and Corinne Meier (2004), the positive and negative experiences of prospective teachers during their teaching practicum are addressed. The study utilized a qualitative research approach and employed two unstructured and open-ended semi-structured questions as data collection instruments, with a sample population of 165 third-year teacher-training students. The findings revealed both positive and negative aspects of the practicum experience.

Regarding the influence of mentor teachers, the positive experiences reported by prospective teachers were related to the support system provided by their mentors. On the other hand, negative experiences included classroom discipline issues, enlistment of students as substitute teachers, and deviations from planned lesson presentations.

Regarding the consistency between theory and practice, the positive experiences highlighted the essential role of teaching practicum in shaping prospective teachers into professionals. However, some trainee teachers reported less than satisfactory experiences due to the quality of mentor teachers and challenges in applying theory to practice.

The interactions and observations between trainee teachers and their mentors during the teaching practicum were identified as significant concerns. Trainee teachers received criticism related to lesson plans, instructional strategies, working with diverse student populations, implementing discipline systems, and comfort levels during observations conducted by mentors and faculty supervisors (Harwell & Moore, 2010).

Harwell and Moore (2010) further emphasized that the expectations conveyed by mentor teachers and faculty supervisors could impact the quality of the practicum experience. Their study addressed three main questions: identifying concerns related to instructional and management practices, examining the effect of interactions with mentor teachers and university supervisors on the effectiveness of the practicum experience, and exploring how mentor teachers' expectations influence the quality of the teaching practicum.

In their study, Harwell, and Moore (2010) utilized a quantitative research approach, administering a four-point Likert scale questionnaire to undergraduate education students enrolled in a reading course. The sample population consisted of 79.9% female and 16.5% male participants, with a majority falling within the 2029 age group. The findings indicated that a significant proportion of respondents experienced practicum situations contrary to their expectations, required more

effort than anticipated and experienced stress.

Regarding the second question, most participants reported receiving constructive criticism from cooperative teachers before presenting teaching activities, with a high success rate upon lesson completion. University supervisors were acknowledged for offering practical advice on general and instructional topics. The majority of respondents had opportunities to work with diverse student populations and gain valuable instructional experiences. University supervisors were also recognized for discussing problems associated with the practicum experience.

Concerning the third question, participants reported that their expectations and those of cooperating teachers were aligned. Mentor teachers effectively communicated these expectations, emphasizing the significance of developing a love for teaching and establishing rapport with parents and caregivers. Participants agreed that mentor teachers stressed the importance of professionalism during the practicum experience. Teaching practicum plays a crucial role in pre-service teacher education, allowing prospective teachers to gain practical experience and develop essential skills. While challenges may arise, the support of mentor teachers and alignment between theory and practice are key factors in ensuring a successful practicum experience. Effective communication, constructive feedback, and opportunities to work with diverse student populations contribute to the overall quality of the practicum.

Importance of Teaching Practicum

Experiencing a teaching practicum is essential for future teachers to gain valuable teaching experience. Without engaging in practicum, individuals cannot truly learn the art of teaching. Widdowson (1999) defines teaching practicum as a training process to achieve various predetermined outcomes. It provides an opportunity to observe challenges and discover possible solutions that can be applied in different teaching settings. Through teaching practicum, prospective teachers learn about their performance and acquire the necessary tools to effectively manage a classroom. During the practicum, prospective teachers can actively participate in both curricular and co-curricular activities, as highlighted by Harvey, Slee, and Lawson (2010). This experience allows them to acquire new knowledge, connect their experiences with relevant theories, and develop a comprehensive understanding of teaching. Teaching practicums enable prospective teachers to apply their

knowledge and develop different strategies to address various aspects of language lessons (Wallace, 1990). They are encouraged to adopt a proactive approach in teaching situations, leveraging their prior knowledge to develop innovative strategies and become successful educators. However, the practicum experience is not without its challenges. As Groundwater-Smith (1993) notes, it can be fraught with difficulties and concerns as students navigate their professional practices and policies.

In light of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown measures worldwide, traditional forms of education and traditional teaching practicums have become challenging. However, this situation has also presented an opportunity to embrace online teaching practicums. The COVID-19 crisis, while causing widespread disruption, has accelerated the shift towards online education systems.

Therefore, despite the limitations posed by the pandemic, prospective teachers can still engage in teaching practicum through online platforms. This alternative approach allows for the continuation of practical training and provides an avenue for future teachers to develop their skills in a virtual teaching environment. By Adapting to Online Teaching Practicum educators can make the most of the current circumstances and ensure the continuity of quality teacher training.

Teaching Practicum in Teacher Education

The experiences of prospective teachers during their practicum can be challenging and filled with various problems. Tuli and File (2009) describe practicum experiences as stressful, highlighting issues such as lack of support from mentor teachers, student behavioral problems, low budget, and disciplinary issues. The role of practicum in teacher preparation is still a topic of debate among educators and scholars, with Schulz (2005) emphasizing its essentiality.

Cooperative teachers and peers play a significant role in shaping the practicum experience, as stated by Farrell (2008). Prospective teachers value observation and interactions with their mentor teachers, including constructive criticism related to lessons and instructional strategies, opportunities to work with diverse student populations, successful implementation of discipline systems, comfort during mentor teacher and faculty supervisor observations, and overall satisfaction with the practicum experience (Harwell & Moore, 2010).

Manzer, and Abbas, (2013) identify three fundamental issues that create problems in practicum programs: short duration, inappropriate timing of school placements, and outdated procedures. Josoh's study in Malaysia (2011) reveals that prospective teachers face various problems related to students, personal challenges, and educational aspects. Practicum provides an opportunity for prospective teachers to understand the students' environment and diversity, transition from students to beginning teachers, and develop personal and professional skills.

Edem (2003) suggests that practicum engagement empowers prospective teachers, challenges them, and provides a sense of empowerment. Osuala (2004) emphasizes exposure to effective teaching methods and practical classroom experience under expert supervision. Through the practicum, prospective teachers learn about their professional responsibilities, including managing and caring for students. Marais and Meier (2004) argue that practicum is a challenging yet essential part of teacher training, particularly in developing countries.

Yassin (2004) identifies problems faced by prospective teachers during practicum in Gaza, including travel issues, lack of guidance from school principals, limited participation in school activities, and disrespectful attitudes of cooperative teachers. Inconsistency in responsibilities is highlighted by Bechuke et al. (2013), with some prospective teachers reporting infrequent visits from university evaluators and supervisors, which can impact the effectiveness of the practicum experience. Overall, the practicum serves as an opportunity for prospective teachers to gain practical teaching experience, understand the challenges of the profession, and develop their professional skills, but it also requires attention to addressing various issues and providing adequate support throughout the process.

Online Learning and Distance Education

Online learning is a method of education where teachers deliver lessons and learning materials through the internet. It falls under the category of distance learning and provides learning opportunities to individuals, including children and adults, who may not have access to traditional educational institutions due to various reasons. It is especially beneficial for those living in remote areas or facing geographical barriers. Over the past two decades, online education has gained popularity in the United States, and many higher education institutions believe it will play a crucial role in the future of education (Allen & Seaman, 2014). The accessibility of the Internet and the flexibility of online courses have made online education an integral part of higher education (Li & Irby, 2008; Luyt, 2013; Lyons, 2004). Additionally, financial constraints faced by many higher education institutions and the changing preferences of students have led to a growing focus on online education (Limperos, Buckner, Kaufmann, & Frisby, 2015). Online education is particularly beneficial for students who face challenges in pursuing traditional education, such as restrictions on traveling to another city or country for higher studies. It is also a suitable option for students whose families prefer single-gender education.

Distance education helps overcome obstacles that prevent students from attending regular classes (Moore et al., 2011; Hrastinski, 2008; Singh and Thurman, 2019; Watts; Yilmaz, 2019).

Asynchronous education allows students to choose their own time to participate in learning activities using different media tools such as email and discussion boards. This flexibility enables students to communicate and engage in educational activities at a time that suits them best, allowing them to learn at their own pace. On the other hand, synchronous education involves real-time interactions through audio or video conferences, facilitating immediate feedback and communication (Hrastinski, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

In this study qualitative research approach was used because the qualitative research approach is a systematic inquiry into exploring the experiences and understanding of the concepts, mechanisms, and opinions of prospective teachers about online teaching practicum during COVID-19.

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology research is used to examine the commonality of the lived experience of prospective teachers about the online teaching practicum in one specific science group of in-service teacher education program. Phenomenological research design is a systematic study of people's experiences and phenomenological study focuses on an explanation of people's experiences.

Sampling Technique

This study was conducted at Fatima Jinnah Women's University Rawalpindi. A purposive sampling technique was used, and the study involved students of the B.Ed. (4 years) program of the 6th semester. These students were selected because they have experience of online teaching practicum during COVID-19, and they had new and fresh experience about online practicum.

Instrument of Data Collection

The researcher used an interview protocol to collect data from prospective teachers.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

To observe this online practicum session and presentations the researcher joined as a silent observer. The semi-structured one-to-one interviews were conducted by the researcher herself and were approximately 40-45 minutes duration to explore the experiences of prospective teachers about online teaching practicum during COVID-19. The interviews were conducted online through Skype and interviews were audio recorded for thematic analysis.

Interview Protocol

Interview protocol was used for data collection. The interview protocol included headings, interviewer instructions, research questions, study details, transition messages, sections for recording interviewer comments, and researcher reflection. The researcher conducted participatory observation during online presentation sessions of each science group student and followed up with individual interviews to collect data.

The researcher used thematic analysis for data analysis. A thematic analysis seeks to know the patterns of themes in the interview data. The themes were found through the 5 stage processes (i) familiarize me with data (ii) create preliminary codes; (iii) search themes; (iv) examine themes; (v) define and name themes.

Ethical Consideration

For conducting the research, firstly, the researcher sought permission from the head of the Department of Education, FJWU. The head of the department permitted the researcher to join Google Classroom. The application was given to the head of the department, which was used as evidence the researcher had permission from the HOD.

Secondly, the researcher sent an application to the faculty practicum supervisor to join their Google classroom for data collection. The application was given to the practicum supervisor along with the HOD permission application, as evidence to join Google Classroom and carry out research with the student of B.Ed. 6th semester of science group.

Participant Profile

All the participants of this research were selected from the 6th semester of Fatima Jinnah Women University. The participants were given pseudonyms to keep their anonymity. Each of the participants was assigned prospective teachers' numbers (PT1) from 1 to 12. The provisional and emergent themes that support the research question of this study 1 and2 are the following:

Table 1. Provisional and emergent themes of research questions.

Research Questions	Provisional Themes
RQ 1 -- How do prospective teachers experience and understand the online practicum?	Online Teaching Practicum
	First Impression about OTP
	Fears of OTP
A. Experiences of prospective teachers	Orientation of OTP
	Interaction with Practicum supervisor
	Online instructions
	Experience with Google Classroom
B. Understanding of online practicum by prospective teachers	Barriers of OTP
	Skills and desired goal
	Planning of OTP
	The main difference between Online teaching practicum and on-site teaching practicum
	Online instructions
	Online training by using Gadgets
	Environment of OTP

Research Question	Emergent Theme
RQ 1 -- How do prospective teachers experience and understand the online practicum? A. Experiences of prospective teachers	Experience of online practicum Pre-Practicum Workshops [Onsite] Orientations with Focal Persons as Schools Discussion with Co-operative Teachers.
B. Understanding of online practicum by prospective teachers	Online practicum training Provided an environment
Research Question	**Provisional Themes**

RQ 2 – How does this understanding of the online practicum shape the teaching-learning experiences of prospective teachers?
 	
A. Teaching learning scholarship after online practicum experience.
	Major components
	   Lesson planning
	   Peer Feedback
	   Supervisor Feedback
	   Lesson Reflection
	   Teaching Session
	   E-portfolio

Research Question	**Emergent Theme**
RQ 2 – How does this understanding of the online practicum shape the teaching-learning experiences of prospective teachers? A. Teaching learning scholarship after online practicum experience.	planning of online teaching practicum Action Plan Experience of E-portfolio

ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS

RQ 1 -- How do prospective teachers experience and understand the online practicum?

A. Prospective Teachers and Supervisor Experiences

The responses of the prospective teachers specifying their lived individual experiences are reported in the given below themes.

Online teaching practicum

In response to the OTP theme of the interview, participants 4, 5, 8, and 12 quoted that the online practicum was interesting and different from traditional face-to-face practicum, it was the continuation of the education system in a difficult mode and interacting via video calls.

The remaining participants shared their views that in online teaching practicum, we as prospective teachers, delivered a lesson in front of peers through the internet via Skype.

First impression of online practicum

In response to the first impression of the online practicum theme of the interview, except for Participant 4, every participant quoted that they were afraid and confused when they heard about the online teaching practicum. Participant 4 stated "I was relaxed. I think

that in an online teaching practicum, there was nothing new gained it's the same as an on-site practicum. We designed the lesson the same as we designed for the on-site practicum of 30 minutes. I think we only copy the on-site process".

Fears of online teaching practicum

In response to the fears of the OTP theme of the interview, participants shared their views that Prospective teachers were afraid when they heard about online teaching due to the fear of judgment, and peer feedback, and they were nervous about how they could present lessons in front of their peers.

The remaining participants 2,3,8, and 10 quoted that "I was afraid because I felt shyness to present lesson", "I was afraid of how I can present a lesson in half an hour", and "I was afraid because I have a mobile data pkg and I don't know how I will make my quality videos" and participant 10 shared that " I was not afraid, I was only confused that how I will do".

Orientation session of OTP

In response to the orientation session of OTP theme of the interview, all participants quoted that the orientation session was excellent, informative, useful, and highly productive, with three supervisors providing

clear explanations on various aspects such as Google Classroom, e-portfolio, online teaching practicum, lesson planning, and different apps.

Interaction with practicum supervisor

In response to the interaction with practicum supervisor theme of the interview Participants of the study showed that prospective teachers generally attended 2-3 days of classes, lasting 2:30 hours each, and encountered no difficulties during their interactions with practicum supervisors.

The remaining Participants 4 and 8 emphasized the importance of such interactions for effective learning, with some participants suggesting that longer durations would support acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Online instructions of OTP

In response to the online instruction of the OTP theme of the interview participants 2,3,4,6,7,8,9, and 10,11,12 quoted that we have no problem in designing and disseminating online instructions. We can easily design and disseminate but after getting practice and training.

While participants 1 and 5 shared that "I have found a little bit difficulty in designing and disseminating online instruction because it was our first experience", to design and disseminate online instruction practice was necessary".

Experience with google classroom

In response to the experience with the Google Classroom theme of the interview, all participants showed satisfaction with their experience using Google Classroom, noting that supervisors shared assignments and material timely and always shared relevant material with the prospective teachers according to their learning needs. Google Classroom was found to be an excellent platform for teachers to efficiently share assignments, quizzes, and papers, while students received notifications regarding their work, including notifications for incomplete tasks and deadlines. This process enabled students to complete and submit their work on time.

B. Understanding of Online Practicum by Prospective Teachers

In response to the questions exploring the understanding of online practicum by prospective teachers, the participants shared their responses which are presented in the themes below.

Barriers of OTP

In response to the barriers of the OTP theme of the interview, all of the participants highlighted that both internet connectivity and electricity were significant challenges in continuing the online practicum. During interactive sessions, prospective teachers experienced complete internet disconnections while delivering presentations or sharing lesson plans. Reconnecting took a substantial amount of time, negatively impacting the quality of their presentations and causing barriers among the prospective teachers. Moreover, uploading recorded videos after the session was also problematic for the prospective teachers.

Skills and desired goals

In response to the skills and desired goals theme of the interview, participants 1,6 and 7 shared their views that we have achieved half desired learning goals because of the limited sessions.

The remaining participants reported significant improvement, ranging from 60 to 80 percent, in their professional skills and achieved 80 percent desired learning goals. They attributed this progress to the online practicum teaching different skills for most of the students like advanced technology etc.

Planning of online teaching practicum

In response to the planning of the online teaching practicum theme of the interview, all of the participants shared their views that Online teaching practicum was unplanned but due to this pandemic the Department of Education decided to conduct online peer micro-teaching instead of cooperative teachers and focal persons. Further shared that the online teaching practicum was unplanned but after deciding on the online teaching practicum it was good and everything was according to the needs of prospective teachers.

The main difference between online teaching practicum and on-site teaching practicum

In response to the theme of the main difference between Online teaching practicum and on-site teaching practicum, participants 1,2,5,7,8,9,10 shared their views that " the major difference was the absence of actual students in online practicum, during online we had to do acting in front of our peers and supervisor but while on-site practicum based on reality, it was very different because the students were not present in online practicum, a prospective teacher presents their lesson in front of peers, no proper classroom feelings, the situation was fake, in online practicum, time was short for activity. The remaining participants 3,4,6,11,12 shared that in online practicum they have never faced time management and travel problems, but they were

unable to understand the behavioral needs of students unable to access students properly as well a lack of concentration in online mode.

Online instructions

In response to the online instruction of the OTP theme of the interview participants 2,3,4,6,7,8, and 10,11,12 quoted that we have no problem in designing and disseminating online instructions. We can easily design and disseminate but after getting practice and training. While the 1, 5, and 9 participants quoted that "I have found a little bit difficulty in designing and disseminating online instruction because it was our first experience", to design and disseminate online instruction practice was necessary", and participant 9 shared that "Yes, I did easily but after getting training and practice".

Online training by using gadgets

In response to the online training by using the gadgets theme of the interview, participants shared that we were not getting proper training but there were our orientation and the workshops in which we were properly guided. Before starting the practicum, by using different gadgets supervisors gave us workshops and orientations about online teaching practicum, but when we had any problem, during class, our supervisor properly explained to us.

Environment of OTP

In response to the theme of the interview, the participants showed that the practicum supervisor always provided us a quiet, safe, and peaceful environment which was very necessary for us.

RQ 2 – How does this understanding of the online practicum shape the teaching-learning experiences of prospective teachers?

A. Teaching Learning Scholarship after Online Practicum Experience

In response to question no 2 exploring the teaching-learning scholarship after online
practicum experience, the participants shared their responses which are presented below in the
themes and sub-themes.

Major components of online practicum
Lesson planning

In response to the lesson planning theme of the interview, all of the participants realized the importance of lesson planning in the teaching practicum, noting that prospective teachers did not face difficulties as they already had prepared lesson plans and easily adapted

them to the online mode, receiving timely feedback on their submissions. Participants shared that peer feedback plays an important role in improving and re-design lessons.

Peer feedback

In response to the peer feedback theme of the interview participants 5 and 8 shared that our peers gave us feedback in more than 3 days, but it was very constructive for us to redesign the lesson. Participant no 2 shared that "peer feedback was motivating and discouraging for us if they give positive feedback, it was so motivating for us if they give negative marking it was discouraging for us".

The remaining participants shared their views that their peers did not give timely feedback and sometimes students do not give appropriate and detailed feedback they only said this lesson was good or bad, and they could not express how they could change the next lesson.

Supervisor feedback

In response to the supervisor's feedback theme of the interview, all of the participants highlighted that our supervisor always gives us timely appropriate feedback and posts timely assignments. She gives us appropriate feedback before submitting to the next lesson plan."

Lesson reflection

In response to the lesson reflection theme of the interview, participants 2 and 11 shared that lesson reflection was our favorite part, and it helped design the next lesson. Participants 2, 8, and 11 stated that "lesson reflection should be in paragraph form because it more better for opinions and ideas".

The remaining participants shared their views that lesson reflection was challenging but necessary to redesign the next lesson, but it should be in multiple-choice question forms.

Teaching session

In response to the teaching session theme of the interview, Participants 6 and 11 stated "Recording was best according to me as compared to interactive because, in the live session, I cannot receive feedback at the time. So, I am a little confused about whether I repeat my lecture or continue it. So, the recording session was much easier for me. I asked questions to myself and then answered them so easily", The recording session was good because of internet issues". The remaining participants highlighted that the interactive session was good because we could interact

on the spot and give responses on the spot.

E-portfolio

In response to the E-portfolio theme of the interview, all of the participants shared that "the e-portfolio played an important role in the online teaching practicum, acting as a valuable tool to present and protect their work, both for currentevaluation and future use as evidence of their teaching capabilities". Further participants explained that A to Z full work could be written in the portfolio like feedback, pictures, lesson plans, action plans, lesson reflection, etc.

DISCUSSION

Practicums play a vital role in professional development, and it's a chance for prospective teachers to understand the realities of teaching and professional activities in the field of education. Schulz, (2005) agreed that the role of the practicum is still dialectical between the educators and scholars as well as practicum is the essential element in teacher preparation. It occupies a large area in educational literature. However, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) has taken the initiative to conduct an online teaching practicum first time.

Online teaching practicum was not decided before the pandemic, but because of the pandemic, the university was required to shift the mode from on-site to online. However, the practicum supervisors of the Department of Education took the initiative and started the online teaching practicum. Winkler and Liguori, (2020) supported the academic institution's online mode as an advanced solution to deal with this pandemic.

9 out of 12 participants were afraid when they heard about online teaching practicum because of fear of judgment and peer feedback, and they were nervous about how they could present lessons in front of their peers. After data analysis, the data showed that peers were not given the proper and timely feedback, they only said good or bad, and they could not express how they could change the next lesson. Farrell (2008) supported the idea that cooperative teachers and peers are the major factor that affects the teaching practicum experience that spends most of the time with prospective teachers.

According to prospective teachers, the orientation session was clear, and every recording and PowerPoint slide was loaded on Google Classroom. The Practicum supervisor organizes, designs, and implements the orientate in which everything was described very

clearly. Maphosa et al. (2007) agreed and suggested that a supervisor must empower their students throughout the practicum session through the workshops and give guidance when needed.

Moreover, there was no proper training for the prospective teacher, but the practicum supervisor proposed an orientation session that consisted of three workshops in which the practicum supervisor discussed the mechanism of the online practicum, how would the prospective teachers give feedback as well as how the prospective teacher can reflect and write a reflection, etc.

Further results show that, during this first experience, prospective teachers faced some barriers like Internet connectivity as well as being worried about their low-quality mobile and laptops. The prospective teacher faced a lot of Internet problems and load shading during this online teaching practicum. Therefore, in the beginning, they were nervous, and they wanted to do an on-site teaching practicum.

The qualitative data show that the online teaching practicum was like an online micro-teaching in which the prospective teachers present lessons in front of peers and supervisors, and after that, both peers and supervisors give feedback to the prospective teachers. In contrast, the prospective teacher feels that they were incompetent to present the lesson in front of peers due to the same age and mental level. According to Yan (2011), pre-service teachers are unwilling to participate in micro-teaching because of the fake classroom situation as well as a shortage of time. In addition, Yan (2011) in microteaching pre-service teachers present lessons in front of peers and supervisors so, this non-natural environment can restrict genuine teaching experience along with actual pupils.

After data analysis, data found, that these major components (lesson planning, lesson reflection, lesson action plan supervisor feedback, and peer feedback) were very necessary for a prospective teacher. However prospective teachers view that the lesson reflection and peer feedback form should be in a quantitative form. After analysis, the data show that reflection was an open-ended thing where the perspective can freely write. However, it cannot be done in Multiple Choice Questions forms. Han (2008) agreed that the prospective teachers were anxious about lesson planning, establishing a good rapport with school management and staff, parents, and students as well as

community, classroom management, and getting support from teacher and lecturer mentors.

Further, the results show that the time duration of interaction with practicum supervisors was very short. But in this short period, we learn more and more things. Therefore, the duration of online practicum should be longer for better learning. Other research justified that three basic issues that create problems in the program that is (1) Practicum duration is very short, (2) transfer of prospective teachers in schools at an inappropriate time,(3) carrying out practicum training using outdated procedure (Manzer & Abbas, 2013).

The results further explained a major part of online teaching practicum was Google Classroom. The data shows that in online teaching practicum, Google Classroom was a good platform to interact with students as well as to post assignments, quizzes, papers, and other learning materials, students can easily submit assignments because students receive time-to-time notifications about the deadlines and incomplete work. Another research justified that Google Classroom ensures streamlined counseling by simply posting assignments (Keeler, 2014).

Crawford, (2015) agreed that Google Classroom always helps in collaborative learning. Mostly teachers used Google Classroom to upload material and post assignments as well as students upload their assignments and give personal comments. Teachers can share their documents as well as assignments so that the students can interact with each other.

Teaching practicums improve and develop professional skills. Brock and Grady, (1998) agreed that it is expected that a teaching practicum provides an opportunity to prospective teachers for the creation of professional identity, to teach and participate in a variety of complex and essential experiences that are essential for meaningful teaching and learning.

Moreover, the results of the study show that the prospective teacher can improve their 100 percent skills in on-site teaching practicum as compared to the online teaching practicum. Prospective teachers explained that we have achieved almost 80 percent of the desired goals and due to the absence of real students, the prospective teacher improved almost 70-80 percent of professional skills. Gujjar, Ramzan, and Bajwa (2011) supported the idea that most prospective teachers are not able to develop teaching skills depending on the various situations.

The finding of qualitative data shows that prospective teachers face a lack of support from peers. Whereas during the onsite practicum, they do not face this problem but during online, prospective teachers face a lack of support from their peers which was the major issue. Tuli and File (2009) supported that practicum experiences were "stressful experiences" The prospective teachers faced many problems during the experiences like lack of support from a mentor teacher, behavioral problems from students, low budget, and disciplinary problems.

Moreover, these prospective teachers have never done online practicum, but they have done some projects in schools through this, they find a lack of support from the mentor teachers.

Further data show that Prospective teachers do not face any problems in designing and submitting lessons, but they face problems in posting due to slow Internet. In contrast, after analysis, the data show that the prospective teacher was unable to write the objective and outcomes after giving the template of lesson planning that was the standard format. Moreover, data show that lesson planning was a major component, and according to the supervisor, we need to give training to the prospective teachers about lesson planning before starting the practicum.

The results of this study further explained that E-portfolios were electronic evidence to show the work of prospective teachers. In E-portfolios prospective teachers post-different work like activity pictures, lesson plans, lesson action plans, etc. E-portfolio was very helpful for the prospective teacher in the present and future as a demo of the prospective teacher. In favor, after analysis, the data show that an E-portfolio was the best opportunity for prospective teachers and practicum supervisors to get an electronic collection of work, as well as an E-portfolio, showing their skills, experiences, and abilities. Peters, Chevrier, LeBlanc, Fortin, and Malette (2006) supported that pre-service teacher thought that the online teaching portfolio creation was beneficial for the development of self-assessment, self-respect, and for the development of reflective and organizational skills. As well as Lin, (2008) Maher, and Gerbic, (2009) agreed that online teaching portfolios give an encouraging environment for prospective teachers to collaborate and communicate with each other and to increase their knowledge as well as their skills through capitalizing on each other

evaluation and ideas.

Further prospective teachers explained that the practicum supervisor's feedback was very essential for us to improve our weaknesses and during the online practicum, our supervisors always gave us timely and appropriate feedback. In supporting this after analysis, the data show that the practicum supervisor put up feedback about everything before teaching the 2, 3,4, and 5 lessons. There was no study supporting this because it was the very first experience of the prospective teachers in the universities of Pakistan.

The funding of the qualitative data shows that lesson planning was the major component of teaching practicum, whether it is an online or on-site practicum. The major concern of prospective teachers was with lesson planning, establishing a good rapport with school management and staff, parents, students as well as community, classroom management, and getting support from teacher and lecturer mentor.

Further study revealed that prospective teachers explained that we had done our practicum in a safe, quiet, and peaceful environment. The practicum supervisor always provides us a safe, quiet, peaceful, and motivated environment. Practicum supervisors always provide a safe, peaceful, and motivational environment to the prospective teachers even at some points when they are a little bit reluctant to show because they have to switch on their cameras, we can easily see their homes, rooms, and even the things that were in your house, that why they little bit reluctant to show.

By supporting Edwards et al.(2018); Manches and Plowman (2017); and McPake et al. (2013) stated that it is important to draw educators' attention to these issues about how to provide safe and healthy online environments, that are appropriate for children, to develop their thinking skills and understanding of technologies for learning in the 21st century.

The further results revealed that the online teaching practicum was very different from the on-site teaching practicum because the mechanism was different, lesson planning was different, fake classrooms and students, and lesson delivery were different, time duration was short as well and they never faced traveling problems. By supporting Yassin (2004) explained the basic problems that the prospective teachers faced at the Faculty of Education in Gaza during their practicum as well as established the following (1) traveling problems

(2) lack of guidance by the school principal, (3) participation, as well as regulation in school activities (4) cooperative teachers, show the lack of respect for prospective teachers.

The result further explained the prospective teachers delivered their lesson in three phases in the first phase they developed and sent their lesson to the practicum supervisor and in the second phase they presented the lessons, after presenting the lesson in the third phase the practicum supervisor gave feedback to the prospective teachers. According to the practicum supervisor, both the practicum supervisor and the prospective teacher used audio, a discussion board, Google Classroom, and Skype for the delivery of the lesson. In contrast, Kim, (2020) presents the different phases of delivering student teaching online in 3 phases as well as with sub-phase like **Phase 1**: planning (1) Learning to teach online (2) Preparing perspective for online teaching. **Phase 2**: implementing (1) Communication, (2) Teaching and supervision. **Phase 3**: reflecting (1) Reflection on children's learning (2) Reflection on distance learning.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that teaching practicum was overall a good experience for prospective teachers, with the practicum supervisor using modern technological tools for effective lesson delivery. The practicum supervisor provided a safe, quiet, motivational, and peaceful environment for the prospective teachers. Additionally, the practicum supervisor arranged orientation sessions to introduce prospective teachers to the online teaching practicum, and the orientation was effective in designing and disseminating online instructions. However, this study also concluded that the teaching sessions to present lesson plans were few, the time duration of the online practicum was very short, and peer feedback was very challenging for the prospective teachers. Further, this study concluded that prospective teachers faced a lot of electricity and internet connectivity issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After the data analysis and conclusion, the present study draws the following recommendations:

1. In this practicum, peer feedback was less attractive. Peer feedback mechanisms may be changed (in which everybody gives feedback right on time and

then gives oral feedback) in the next practicum and in the present practicum, the evaluation form was quantitative, so in the next practicum supervisor feedback form should be qualitative.

2. The time duration of the practicum may be increased further before starting the practicum proper lesson planning training should be given to the prospective teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. This present research was focused on only the Education Department of FJWU. Further research may be focused on the education departments of other universities.

2. In the present research, the researcher documents only B.Ed. 6th-semester science group. Future research may be focused on B.Ed. 8th semester as well as further research may be conducted on the comparative analysis by comparing the different groups like English, Science, and Mathematics.

3. The present research was limited to the interview. Further research can be conducted with focused group discussion along with interviews for better understanding.

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