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Addressing Interpersonal Challenges: Strategies Used by Trainee Teachers in Practicum

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ABSTRACT

Trainee teachers frequently encounter significant interpersonal challenges during their practicum, including building rapport with students, managing classroom behavior, and other related issues. These challenges can affect their confidence and effectiveness in real teaching settings. This study investigates the interpersonal challenges faced by trainee teachers and identifies strategies they use to overcome them. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from trainee teachers at the Faculty of Education, UiTM Puncak Alam, through open-ended surveys and questionnaires. The findings indicate that trainee teachers commonly struggle with areas such as teaching skills, classroom management, and lesson preparation. To address these challenges, they employ strategies including two-way communication, active learning, reflective practice, and feedback from students and mentors. Based on these results, the study offers recommendations for teacher training institutions, mentors, and policymakers to enhance the practicum experience. Suggestions include conducting longitudinal studies to monitor trainee teachers' development over time, thereby increasing the research's relevance and practical application in improving teacher training and professional development. Overall, this study contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen teacher education programs and better prepare future educators for real-world classroom environments.

Keywords: trainee teachers, interpersonal challenges, effective strategies, practicum, questionnaire

1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession is a vital and honorable vocation that contributes significantly to shaping both individuals and society. Teachers are committed professionals who provide students with essential knowledge, skills, and values, preparing them for academic success and life beyond the classroom. Their role extends beyond simply delivering content; they also serve as mentors, facilitators, and role models. By fostering a supportive and nurturing learning environment, teachers encourage students to explore ideas, ask questions, and develop both intellectually and emotionally.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research was adapt a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods which will allow for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies from multiple perspectives. Qualitative dominant concurrent nested mixed methods design. The study was involve trainee teachers who completed their practicum in educational institutions or teaching in supervised settings. The chosen mixed methods approach for this study allows participants to express their comprehension through a socially constructed process that incorporates their real-life experiences and learning (Chua, 2020).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are derived from both qualitative and quantitative analyses, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by trainee teachers during their practicum, the effective strategies they employed, and the relationship between these challenges and their reflection for improvement. The findings related to demographic information and related research questions data. The qualitative data was gathered from open-ended surveys and the quantitative data was analysed using statistical tests such as Independent Sample T-Tests and ANOVA.

This study investigates the interpersonal challenges faced by trainee teachers during their practicum and the strategies employed to overcome these challenges. The findings, derived from both qualitative and quantitative analyses, reveal that trainee teachers encounter multiple interconnected difficulties, particularly in lesson planning, classroom management, student engagement, student comprehension, and teaching delivery. These challenges are further intensified by emotional pressures such as stress and anxiety, especially during the early stages of practicum.

Qualitative results indicate that trainee teachers struggle to adapt lesson content to diverse student abilities while simultaneously adhering to curriculum requirements. Classroom management issues arise mainly due to limited experience and unfamiliarity with students' behaviour. Additionally, low student engagement, influenced by factors such as fatigue, lack of interest, and gender dynamics, presents a significant barrier to effective teaching. Difficulties in ensuring student understanding, particularly among learners with weak foundational knowledge, also contribute to teaching challenges. These findings highlight the gap between theoretical preparation and real classroom realities.

To address these challenges, trainee teachers adopt various adaptive strategies. Effective practices include establishing two-way communication to build rapport with students, implementing active learning approaches such as group discussions and movement-based activities, and incorporating games and reward systems to enhance motivation. Furthermore, trainee teachers demonstrate a strong reliance on reflective practices, mentorship, and continuous self-improvement to refine their teaching skills. The use of student feedback and daily reflection plays a crucial role in identifying weaknesses and improving instructional approaches.

Quantitative findings reveal no significant differences in challenges or strategies based on gender and programme code, suggesting that trainee teachers share similar practicum experiences regardless of background. However, a significant positive relationship was found

between challenges and reflective practices, indicating that greater challenges often lead to deeper reflection and professional growth.

The discussion highlights that these findings are consistent with existing literature, particularly in relation to the complexity of transitioning from theory to practice. Challenges in classroom management, lesson planning, and student engagement are widely recognised as common among novice teachers. Importantly, the study emphasizes that challenges serve as catalysts for professional development when supported by reflective practices and effective coping strategies.

Overall, the practicum experience is both demanding and transformative. While trainee teachers face considerable interpersonal and instructional challenges, these experiences contribute significantly to their growth as educators. The study underscores the importance of strengthening teacher training programs by enhancing practical exposure, promoting reflective learning, integrating technology effectively, and providing strong mentorship support. These improvements are essential to better prepare future educators for the complexities of real classroom environments.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that trainee teachers face a range of interpersonal and instructional challenges during their practicum, particularly in lesson planning, classroom management, student engagement, and ensuring student understanding. These challenges are often accompanied by emotional pressures, reflecting the complexity of transitioning from theoretical knowledge to real classroom practice.

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