

Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Practice Teaching: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

Practice teaching is a multifaceted endeavour, characterized by various opportunities, challenges, and moments of excitement among soon-to-be educators. It is a course of study that incorporates innovative pedagogical methods to develop skills that extend beyond the traditional chalk-and-talk approach. This study examines the perspectives of four practice teachers, who were purposively selected from two constituent campuses of Tribhuvan University, employing a narrative inquiry research design. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews conducted in Nepali. The data were transcribed and translated into English, coded, and then thematically analyzed and interpreted. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers expressed views about their teaching practice, which helped them enhance their teaching skills and professional competence, which is attributed to the course's role in understanding instructional methodologies. However, the study also revealed that the participants faced challenges, including a lack of confidence, a shortage of resources, poorly managed classrooms, and insufficient supervision in implementing the skills learned during their teaching practice. This calls for a thorough review of the pre-service teaching program requirements to ensure the successful implementation of teaching practice as a core element of teacher education.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, supervision, teacher education, teaching practice

Introduction

Teaching practice (TP) serves as a vital process in teacher education, providing pre-service teachers with practical pedagogical knowledge and skills in specialized subject areas, which are essential for preparing them for real classroom environments. Accordingly, TP is a core component of many professional preparation programs, designed to bridge theoretical

knowledge with practical teaching experiences (Bailey, 2010; Kim et al., 2025), which prepares student-teachers for the actual teaching profession (White & Forgasz, 2016). It helps teachers integrate theoretical knowledge from university courses into practical school settings, allowing teachers to plan, teach, reflect, and act with the guidance of a supervisor (Brown, 2008; Tuli, 2014).

Terracing practice is designed to equip educators with the skills to plan and deliver instruction suited to students' needs while fostering their professional growth (Ghamrawi et al., 2024). It is a key requirement for pre-service teachers to undergo a teaching practice in all subjects of education in Nepal. It encompasses teachers' learning experiences that play a crucial role in preparing future qualified teachers (Clarke et al., 2014). Teaching practice provides students with practical training, enabling them to gain firsthand experience in implementing teaching methods, strategies, techniques, principles, and instructional support in a real classroom setting. Teaching practice plays a crucial role in preparing future teachers and in developing qualified educators when implemented effectively (Rubeena, 2022). High-quality, hands-on teaching practice training prepares teachers to enhance teaching methods, techniques, and educational resources (Kadel, 2023). This training supports educational reform by integrating new improvements into curricular and instructional practices, enabling teachers to drive innovation in the field.

Despite its potential, teaching practice at both the bachelor's and master's levels has been one of the most neglected aspects of teacher preparation in the Nepalese education system (Bhandari & Bhandari, 2024; Lama, 2024). Teaching practice is a mandatory component of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Master of Education (M.Ed.) programs at Tribhuvan University. Programs, involving micro-teaching, peer-teaching, and real teaching, on-campus and off-campus. Thus, this study explores pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching practice, highlighting the opportunities and challenges. The insights from this study are intended to help educational stakeholders address these challenges towards enhancing teaching practice.

Literature Review

The literature on teaching practice highlights challenges and adaptations, the integration of critical thinking and technology, and the importance of collaboration and support.

Challenges and adaptation in teaching practice

The studies collectively highlight the dual nature of teaching practice experiences, in which pre-service teachers face significant challenges yet still undergo meaningful growth. In this line, Caires et al. (2012) found that teachers in Portugal experienced stress and fatigue during their teaching practice; however, they simultaneously developed essential skills and gained confidence in their teaching roles. Similarly, Yuan and Stapleton (2020) observed that pre-service language teachers faced difficulties in incorporating critical thinking (CT) due to inadequate conceptual understanding and preparation, reflecting a broader issue of insufficient pedagogical readiness among pre-service teachers. These findings underscore the need for structured support systems that mitigate stressors while fostering professional adaptability. A study by Kadel (2023) in Nepal revealed several issues in teaching practice, including inadequate feedback and comments from peers and supervisors, a perception of teaching practice as a merely ritualistic activity, and the need for better management to engage pre-service teachers. The primary reasons for the ineffectiveness of teaching practice include a lack of English language competence, an essential component of classroom

teaching, insufficient exposure to lesson planning, and inadequate remuneration for supervisors.

A recent study by Kandel and Bist (2024) in Nepal examines the role of teaching practice in preparing qualified, trained, and student-centred teachers. At the same time, university supervision was found to be satisfactory. They also recognized the significant role of cooperative schools in facilitating the identification of their strengths and areas for improvement. To enhance teaching practice, the study recommends that universities and schools work together to make the experience more flexible and engaging. Strengthening collaboration between schools and universities can improve teacher preparation programs and the quality of education.

Integration of critical thinking and the use of technology in teaching practice

Integrating Critical Thinking (CT) into teaching practice is crucial for developing students' problem-solving skills and fostering a deeper understanding. The value of critical thinking in modern education emerges as a recurring theme. Yuan and Stapleton (2020) emphasize the challenges of promoting CT among pre-service language teachers due to a lack of training and conceptual clarity. This calls for reforms in teacher education programs to integrate CT-focused pedagogies effectively. The study emphasizes critical thinking as a crucial component of effective teaching strategies. Despite a few challenges, technology-integrated language teaching has been accepted as a modern student-centred approach (Bhandari et al., 2025). The transition to technology-driven education, particularly during critical times, is a central focus in multiple studies. Fořtová et al. (2021) documented how pre-service EFL teachers adapted to online teaching, perceiving technology as a fundamental tool. Similarly, Fotopoulou (2024) explored the experiences of pre-school education students, emphasizing how technological adaptations during the pandemic were seen as beneficial for future teaching careers. These findings highlight a paradigm shift toward integrating digital tools in education, reflecting the need to equip pre-service teachers with technological competencies for both in-person and online settings.

Collaboration and support in teaching practice

Collaboration and support in teaching practice are crucial for creating a constructive learning environment and improving educational outcomes. Caires et al. (2012) identified the value pre-service teachers placed on supervisor support, which helped them navigate the challenges of teaching. In contrast, De Backer et al. (2023) found that pre-service teachers held diverse views on team teaching, suggesting the need for clear guidance on collaborative practices. Teaching practice enables trainee teachers to align their expectations with classroom contexts (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2018). These studies collectively emphasize the need for a supportive teaching environment that encourages teamwork and mentorship.

The gap highlighted across these studies lies in the insufficient alignment between teacher training programs and the multifaceted challenges in pre-service teacher training, particularly in integrating critical thinking, managing stress, adapting to technology, and effectively utilizing collaboration and mentorship. This explores pre-service teachers' perceptions of opportunities and challenges of teaching practice, addressing a gap in existing literature. In this context, we aimed to explore pre-service teachers' views on teaching practice and to identify the challenges and opportunities associated with it.

and to analyze the related challenges and opportunities. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following research questions.

1. How do pre-service teachers perceive teaching practice?
2. What opportunities and challenges do they encounter during teaching practice?

Method

This study employed a narrative inquiry research design to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching practice in Rupandehi, a district in Western Nepal. Four pre-service teachers from B.Ed. and M.Ed. were selected through purposive sampling. We selected the participants based on their knowledge and experience of the phenomenon being explored (Cohen et al., 2018). We conducted semi-structured interviews in the participants' mother tongue (Nepali) to collect data, focusing on their perceptions, opportunities, and challenges encountered during their teaching practice. Additionally, class observations were conducted to triangulate the data. The most relevant narratives were transcribed and translated into English. The data were then coded, thematized, and interpreted descriptively following Braun and Clarke's (2021) methodology for thematic analysis. The researchers obtained oral consent from each participant and assigned them pseudonyms to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Results and Findings

In this section, we present the results and discussion of the findings under the following two main themes, along with their respective sub-themes.

Pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching practice

Teaching practice (TP) provides pre-service teachers with rich experiences that positively impact their perceptions of the teaching profession (Mydin et al., 2024). The participants developed an interest in teaching and were exposed to real classroom situations, preparing themselves for the teaching profession. ST-1 mentioned, "Teaching practice helped me acquire valuable qualities to prepare myself as a good teacher. I learned to use the teaching materials appropriately in the classroom." She narrated that teaching practice is important in preparing pre-service student teachers for the teaching profession, as it helps them learn to use basic teaching skills effectively. ST-1's perceptions align with those of Muhammad (2006), who emphasizes that well-prepared and highly qualified teachers are catalysts for societal change, profoundly affecting their regular teaching duties and ultimately leading to high-quality education.

Pre-service teachers gain general experience in the teaching profession and can communicate and interact closely with learners, as well as effectively manage the class (Khazen et al., 2025). ST-2 stated, "Micro teaching and peer teaching supported me in preparing lesson plans and materials, keeping records, engaging my students in school activities, and enhancing my content knowledge and skills for real teaching." Pre-service teachers can develop the confidence and competence necessary for adequate lesson preparation and material construction and acquire the skills and attitudes of a teacher throughout the program. It also reveals that teaching practice helps pre-service student teachers keep records of student assignments and participate in school activities. They can also master professional skills and broaden their knowledge of the subject matter.

Thus, teaching practice bridges the gap between theory and practice, allowing pre-service teachers to refine their skills, gain confidence, and develop a professional identity through hands-on experience. The participants involved in teaching practice reported the following opportunities.

Bridging theory with practice

Teaching practice serves as a bridge between academic courses and students in a language-learning classroom. It enhances pre-service teachers' skills in effectively facilitating students' development of expected skills and knowledge. Al Malki et al. (2022) suggested including the number of practical courses and scheduling them towards the final stage of the pre-service program to prepare student teachers for real classroom teaching. Teaching practice highlights the crucial role of education in transforming participants' teaching identities from a theoretical focus to a more practical approach.

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Improvement of professional skills

Teaching practice enhanced the quality of teacher education programs by familiarizing pre-service teachers with the teaching process, its complexity, and the challenges they are likely to encounter. Teaching practice is crucial for the personal and professional development of future teachers (Azhar & Kayani, 2017). ST-3 asserted, "We design lesson plans and instructional materials suitable to the needs of our students, construct test instruments, get the opportunity to interact with real learners, and develop our pedagogical skills, knowledge, and competencies in global standards." The participants' lived experiences of teaching practice support pre-service student teachers in designing and implementing lesson plans, developing teaching materials, and recognizing the realities of the classroom atmosphere. Practice teaching offers prospective teachers valuable hands-on experience. While doing this, they engage in teaching, administrative tasks, and assessments. Teaching practice provides pre-service teachers with the opportunity to experience real-world classroom situations (Ray et al., 2023).

Pre-service teachers develop pedagogical reasoning skills and the capacity to reflect on and revise their teaching during real-world teaching situations (Richards & Farrell, 2011). Integrating theory into practice is a key objective of teaching practice for pre-service teachers. As they progress through their degree, they are expected to link university-based coursework to school-based practice through teaching practice (Tuli, 2009). In response to our question regarding the theory-practice connection, ST-1 claimed:

In my practice teaching, I had the opportunity to apply the theories I learned in the classroom. ... the theories of teaching approaches, methods, and techniques, in real classroom practice. I learnt better pedagogical skills to make myself a professional."

The participants' experience applying theoretical knowledge to enhance their pedagogical skills reflects Tuli and File's (2010) findings that a quality teaching practice

program integrates theoretical knowledge and professional practice across the three domains of a teacher education program, which include content knowledge gained through liberal education, professionalism, pedagogical skills, and insights. Similarly, the participants' experiences align with Richards and Farrell's (2011) findings that cooperating teachers' and supervisors' support during practice teaching provides pre-service teachers with ongoing feedback and guidance in teaching, preparing them to enter the profession with basic pedagogical knowledge and skills.

Constructive feedback and effective guidance

Working with an experienced teacher for an extended period allows them to receive feedback and guidance on their teaching. When the institution sends pre-service teachers with a supervisor to schools, the pre-service teachers receive competent advice from them. Working with cooperating teachers, they receive a wide range of experience, supportive guidance and direction, constructive criticism, as well as encouragement and support (Lakkala et al., 2021). In this regard, ST-3 stated, "My teachers' feedback and support helped me collaborate with my colleagues and help them cope with classroom challenges." Pre-service teachers receive constructive feedback and guidance, track their progress through regular follow-ups with their head teachers, and are encouraged to participate in various school activities actively. Their views align with those of Kunwar et al. (2023). The authors state that the headteacher can support pre-service English teachers by arranging meetings and providing guidance and assistance within the school. In this line, ST-2 responded, "I got a platform where I learned to use my knowledge of teaching courses, materials development, lesson planning, presentation skills, and classroom management during teaching practice." Her experience reveals that practice teaching helps pre-service teachers connect theories to practice.

Likewise, another participant, ST-1, expressed her experience, "Through teaching practice, I have had the opportunity to transform my theoretical knowledge into practice in a real school setting." Her experience demonstrates that practice teaching enables pre-service teachers to connect the theory they have learned with practical experience. This is in harmony with Tuli (2010). The author found that teaching practice helps pre-service teachers see theory in practice. ST2 added, "My campus supervisor provided me with theoretical and constructive feedback during micro and peer teaching, but the cooperating teacher gave direct and real feedback during real teaching." Her campus supervisor offered theoretical, constructive feedback to pre-service teachers, whereas her cooperating teacher provided practical, straightforward feedback. Her view aligns with Altınmakas (2012). He found that university supervisors provided more theoretical and constructive feedback, while cooperating with teachers focused on immediate, practical, and directive feedback to the pre-service teachers.

Building confidence in pedagogical skills

Teaching practice is essential for enhancing the pedagogical skills and personal competencies of pre-service teachers. Initially, they may struggle with various challenges, but real-life exposure through teaching enhances their interpersonal skills, independence, and creativity, thereby mitigating classroom issues (Shanti & Jaafar, 2021). The pre-service teachers gradually build confidence and teaching competence, shaping their professional growth. This hands-on experience enables them to apply their knowledge and skills in real classrooms, influencing their teaching beliefs and perspectives (Wilson, 2006).

In response to the query regarding our participant's professional and personal experience of teaching practice, ST-1 asserted, "I am aware of my roles and duties as a teacher. I learned much about classroom activities while dealing with real students under my supervisor's guidance." The participant emphasized her understanding of teaching roles, responsibilities, and essential skills. She has also gained confidence in guiding pre-service teachers and effectively handling teaching challenges. In this vein, ST-2 added, "Teaching practice is very significant for teachers. It supports trainee teachers like us in overcoming fear and hesitation. I work with fellow students, supervisors, and teachers." Teaching practice focuses on building confidence rather than competency (Mohamad et al., 2025). The teaching practice process is a collaborative effort that involves in-service teachers, supervisors, and cooperating schools. In this setup, the cooperating schoolteachers play a crucial role in supporting the professional growth of in-service teachers, who gain hands-on experience under their direct guidance (Clarke et al., 2014; Cong & Jiang, 2021; Rubeena, 2022).

Similarly, ST3 articulated the ideas clearly when he said, "Teaching practice assisted me to minimize my hesitation, and I became more confident and developed the idea to link theory to practice." Teaching practice helps teachers overcome their hesitation, build confidence, and develop the ability to connect theory with practical application. This view aligns with Brouwer and Korthagen (2005), who argue that teaching practice bridges the gap between theory and practice, enhancing teachers' classroom skills and providing an opportunity for pre-service teachers to develop their teaching competence.

The findings corroborate Darling-Hammond's (2017) views on teaching practice, which suggests that it plays a vital role in shaping pre-service teachers' identities, offering them a space to discover and refine their sense of self as educators while fostering positive emotions, such as self-confidence and job satisfaction. The participants' experiences also resemble Jeffery's (2008) research findings, which suggest that student teaching experience increases pre-service teachers' professional dedication and motivation to remain in the profession. Thus, pre-service teachers agree that a teaching practice program enhances their pedagogical confidence, helping them familiarize themselves with the curriculum and gain a better understanding of the changing roles of teachers in the real field.

Challenges in Teaching Practice

Pre-service teachers reported various challenges, such as lesson planning, limited resources, task or activity preparation and implementation, hesitation and low confidence, and ineffective supervision. The following sub-themes discuss the challenges faced in their classrooms.

Difficulty in planning, preparation, and implementation

Effective planning and preparation are crucial for a successful teaching career, as inadequate planning can hinder professional growth (Golis, 2025). Insufficient use of teaching aids, excessive teacher talk time, neglect of lesson plans, poor motivation, and poor classroom management are common challenges in teaching practice. Regarding this, ST-1 stated, "I find it difficult to plan lessons including various teaching items and implement them in my class. Sometimes, I cannot complete the lesson in time, and sometimes, I complete it before the bell rings." ST-2 and ST-3 shared a similar experience: they initially struggled to plan lessons as expected, and the lessons were often not completed within the allotted time. However, ST4 managed to meet all these with the help of his mentor teacher. He said, "I live near my teachers' house, so I even go to his home to seek help to plan for effective lessons and teaching materials."

Three out of four participants' experiences indicate difficulty planning, preparing, and implementing lessons effectively and on time during student teaching practice sessions. Their experiences align with those of Scott (2015). The author found that teachers encounter difficulties in designing, planning, and organizing learning activities for students, which are essential aspects of teaching practices. Teaching practice is a crucial training experience for pre-service teachers to develop their teaching skills and prepare them for classroom challenges. Msangya et al. (2016) suggest preparing academically qualified, professionally skilled, and ethically committed educators to make university teaching practice programs more effective.

Ineffective training and lack of confidence

Pre-service teachers revealed a lack of confidence and effectiveness during interviews and classroom presentations, as observed in class. In this context, ST-3 reported, "In the beginning, I had less confidence because I was not appropriately trained. So, I faced some disruptive behaviours from students. However, I later realized that the leading cause of his students' disciplinary problems was his lack of experience and confidence in teaching. This experience aligns with Widiati et al. (2018), who found that some teachers still lack confidence in their knowledge and skills during their first year of teaching. Jeffery (2008) supports this view that student teaching experience increases pre-teachers' confidence in their skills and motivates them to remain in teaching. The primary reasons for the ineffectiveness of the teaching practice in the faculty of education are inadequate and insufficient training and experience in constructing materials, test items, and analysis.

Informational orientation provides pre-service teachers with the necessary pedagogical skills. Nevertheless, the usual orientation program, micro-teaching, and peer teaching appear to be unsystematic. Teacher education programs are criticized for failing to prepare pre-service teachers due to ineffective training in transferring their theoretical content knowledge into real classroom teaching (Eilam & Poyas, 2009). The participants also revealed a lack of an effective orientation system and effective implementation of microteaching.

The inadequate teaching training program is another problematic area in universities' teaching practice (Al Maktoum, 2024). ST-4 states, "Although we were supposed to be trained for 15 days in micro-teaching practice and 30 days in teaching practice, most of us participated in a three-day micro-teaching at the campus and 20-25 days in teaching practice." The participants' experiences reveal that training in B.Ed. and M.Ed. programs is not conducted as expected. The other three participants also agreed that they did not get the designated hours for teaching training. Each participant's experience aligns with the findings of Bechuke et al. (2013). The authors found that many mentors fail to fulfill their responsibilities due to inadequate training, and university supervisors are unreliable in their supervisory roles. The study found that university supervisors often do not visit schools or campuses regularly, and in some cases, not at all, despite their crucial role in the success of the teaching practice. By establishing proper coordination between the cooperating institutions and universities, practice teaching programs can be made successful.

Inadequate resources, remuneration and class management

Effective teaching and learning activities are ensured only in a well-managed classroom; however, pre-service teachers often do not receive adequate opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice due to inadequate management and subpar physical facilities. The neighbouring schools regard this program as a significant burden to manage, as it involves 20-50 pre-service teachers every day in various subjects and classes.

ST-2 mentioned, “When we asked our supervisors to mentor us regularly and give feedback, they showed their unwillingness as they do not get sufficient remuneration for their work from the campus.” The teaching practice program faced challenges due to inadequate remuneration for internal supervisors, leading to a lack of commitment to mentoring pre-service teachers. Supervisors are not compensated for their efforts, which impacts on their willingness to share expertise and professionalism. To address this, respondents suggested better management and sufficient remuneration to enhance the program’s effectiveness.

To effectively promote pre-service teachers’ inquiry into teaching and learning, the relevant authorities provide adequate resources, including materials, lesson plan books, manuals, textbooks, reference books, audio-visual records, and projectors. ST4 responded, “The school instructs us to manage everything needed for the classroom ourselves.” The participant highlights the resource challenges that pre-service teachers face during teaching practice. Managing behaviour is one of the most significant concerns for novice and pre-service teachers in achieving effective classroom management (Harmer, 2008).

Poor administrative support and collaborative environment

A cooperative, supportive, and positive atmosphere plays a significant role in teaching (Liu & Sun, 2025). However, the participants’ experiences reveal that the institutional atmosphere lacks strong support. Pre-service teachers received lower cooperation from supervisors, learners, and schools. In this context, ST-4 stated, “My supervisor visited our school only once during the teaching practice and left without any class observation and with constructive feedback. In a similar line, ST-2 and ST-3 shared, “...even our headteacher invited us to a teachers’ meeting. If we were invited, we would share the issues related to our classroom and students.” Their narratives align with the findings of Ray et al. (2023), which indicate that most teacher education institutions do not provide adequate guidance for the practice-teaching program. The narratives indicate poor, inadequate monitoring and supervision during practice teaching. The level of interaction between trainee teachers and tutors varies based on factors such as school-college partnerships, school-based mentors, and regular visits from supervising tutors (Sivan & Chan, 2009). Infrequent visits by mentors and supervisors limit the impact on trainee teachers.

Regarding the support and cooperation, the teaching practitioners get from schools, ST-1 replied, “In the beginning, the English teacher, in the presence of the headteacher, instructed us to accomplish three chapters of the textbook in a month. However, neither of them entered my class to offer feedback and support.” Her experiences were like ST-4, who also said, “I felt as if I was the only teacher, a permanent teacher in the class. No one was assigned to monitor it, not even our college supervisor. If I were given timely feedback on my classroom activities, I could improve my performance even better.” These storylines are consistent with Ellis et al. (2020), who believe that mentors should establish strong connections with pre-service teachers and engage them in meaningful conversations to enhance their knowledge and teaching abilities. The quality of field experience in teaching practice improves when supervisors are more involved.

The participants’ stories reveal that teaching practice is a valuable learning tool, helping develop teaching skills and preparing them for real-world work. However, challenges include insufficient financial support and less coordination between the campus and cooperating schools in teaching practice. This highlights the importance of support for learners, teachers, and schools in enhancing the performance of pre-service teachers. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that when a trainee teacher is in the zone of proximal development for a particular task, providing appropriate assistance will give students the ‘boost’ they need to achieve it. In the same vein, Jeffrey (2008) states that more frequent

feedback from university supervisors is related to greater pre-service teacher confidence and a stronger desire to remain in the teaching profession.

Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching practice conducted at the end of their B.Ed. and M.Ed. programs. The findings suggest that the teachers perceived teaching practice positively as a valuable opportunity for their professional development, as it helped them connect theory with practice and enabled them to apply the skills they learned in real classrooms. Similarly, teaching practice enhanced the participant teachers' essential teaching skills, confidence, and professional awareness, emphasizing the significance of on-campus activities such as micro-teaching and peer teaching. However, the study also identified challenges in planning, preparation, and implementation, as well as in resource management and adequate supervision, to effectively transmit its findings. A lack of sufficient institutional support and supervision was identified as another key issue to be addressed for effective teaching practice, a crucial component of teacher preparation. The study emphasizes the importance of enhanced training, regular supervision and coordination, provision of suitable teaching aids, frequent interactions between teachers and students, and adequate supervision to promote effective teaching practices.

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