



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Investigating the quality of implementation of the internship course in Farhangian University from the perspective of Science department students

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ABSTRACT

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Internship, Internship Evaluation, Science Education, Farhangian University

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The purpose of this study is to evaluate the quality of internship implementation from the perspective of students at Shahid Sharafat Center, Nasibeh Campus, Tehran. The research focuses on the internship course within Sciences group. Employing a descriptive-survey method, the statistical population consists of students admitted in 2020 in Sciences majors. Out of 263 students in fields such as mathematics education, physics, chemistry, biology, and general science, 198 completed the questionnaire. The research instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire, validated by experts and yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.92. The questionnaire comprises 38 items across three main dimensions: the role of the academic supervisor, the mentor teacher, and the internship curriculum—assessing how effectively these components bring student-teachers closer to educational and developmental goals. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. The findings indicate that students generally rated the internship as effective, the role of the academic supervisor as satisfactory, and the role of the mentor teacher as weak.

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Introduction and Problem Statement

Following the establishment of Farhangian University in 2011 and the subsequent revision of its curriculum, the internship course received significant attention. Previously a two-credit course often treated as a formality—sometimes limited to obtaining a school principal’s signature showing the interns have attended some classes—it was transformed into an eight-credit program, divided into four two-credit courses. This redesign aimed to enhance both professional and personal development.

In Internship I, students engage in reflective observation to identify meaningful issues across various domains. By the end of this course, they are expected to articulate a problem and, in future challenges, apply scientific methods to address personal and professional difficulties. Internship II involves designing and conducting micro-activities to solve identified problems through action research. Internship III emphasizes practitioner inquiry, helping students recognize their strengths and weaknesses in teaching, moving toward professional identity. Internship IV focuses on lesson study, guiding students toward becoming reflective educators.

Ideally, these stages equip student-teachers with classroom management skills, analytical capabilities in practical education, and teaching proficiency. But does this ideal translate into practice? Do students genuinely experience growth and transformation after completing these courses?

Numerous studies have explored various aspects of internship—some examining its curriculum, others its implementation barriers, and some identifying strengths and weaknesses. Evidence suggests that despite improvements, internship is still not taken seriously by some students. Interviews with graduates revealed that while they later recognized internship as the most impactful course, they initially did not treat it with due seriousness.

A key function of internship in teacher education is bridging the gap between theoretical coursework and real-world classroom experience. Its goal is to enable students to apply learned knowledge and develop the skills necessary to become competent and effective teachers. Research on teacher training centers indicates that student-teachers’ learning often remains at the level of knowledge and comprehension [5]

Maleki’s doctoral dissertation evaluated the internship program for elementary education at Farhangian University, reporting a 99% quality rating from experts. In contrast, Gholami assessed the program as weak, and Asghari reached similar conclusions. Mahmoudian (2016) found the curriculum appropriate but its implementation lacking. Alidadi (2019), in evaluating internship in Farhangian University of Fars, noted that while exposure to real classrooms reduced student stress, excessive emphasis on report writing, lack of instructor mastery, and poor mentor teacher collaboration were major weaknesses. Farrokhi et al. (2020) described internship as a bridge between theory and practice, enhancing students’ readiness for teaching. Babaei (2021) identified weaknesses such as misalignment between university courses and teacher needs, insufficient resources, and *unrealistic* evaluation methods, while highlighting strengths like broadening student perspectives and promoting reflective teaching. Taslimi (2021), in a review article, acknowledged the curriculum’s strengths but pointed out implementation barriers.

Recent research can be categorized into two main groups:

- **Qualitative studies:** evaluating the internship curriculum, generally viewed positively by experts (e.g., Maleki, 2015; Masoumpanah et al., 2015; Ghanbari, 2021; Hosseinzadeh et al., 2021; Gholamzadeh et al., 2023; Ahmadi & Ahmadi, 2016; Ghorbani & Mirshah Jafari, 2016; Gooyaa et al., 2022; Ahmadi et al., 2019; Azimi et al., 2019; Ezzazi, 2021; Taghizadeh, 2021; Mohammadzadeh & Mashhadi, 2021) [5,8,11,12].

- Implementation-focused studies revealing significant shortcomings in execution[1,8,11,12].

Despite extensive research on internship, few studies have specifically evaluated its implementation in sciences. Given the novelty of Farhangian University and its internship program, such evaluations are essential. The dynamic nature of the program and the evolving experience of its facilitators necessitate ongoing assessment. Moreover, research on internship in Basic Sciences in Iran remains limited.

The internship curriculum aspires to cultivate reflective teachers through a robust set of professional experiences. Student-teachers are expected to apply, refine, and reconstruct theoretical knowledge to develop educational competencies. Practical training is a core component of teacher education, closely tied to content-related qualifications [1,5]. This raises a critical question: Is the internship implemented in alignment with its intended design?

Research Questions and Methodology

The research is guided by the following questions:

What is the role of the academic supervisor in the implementation of the internship?

What is the role of the mentor teacher in the internship?

To what extent does the implemented internship bring student-teachers closer to educational and developmental goals?

This study employed a descriptive–survey design to evaluate the effectiveness of the internship program. The statistical population consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in the teacher education program. total of 263 students were invited to participate, of whom 198 completed the questionnaire.

The data collection instrument was a researcher-designed questionnaire composed of 38 items covering three dimensions: the role of the university supervisor, the role of the mentor teacher, and the internship curriculum. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “very weak” to “excellent.”

In this study, a desirability threshold of 2.34 was established:

A mean score above 3.7 indicates a desirable status

A score between 2.34 and 3.7 reflects a moderate status

A score below 2.34 denotes a weak status

The content validity of the questionnaire was reviewed and confirmed by subject matter experts. Reliability was examined using Cronbach’s alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency.

For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed, including mean scores, standard deviation, frequencies, and the Chi-square test (χ^2) to examine the significance of differences between

Research Findings

Question 1: How do students perceive the role of the academic supervisor in the implementation of the internship?

Of the 31 questionnaire items, nine focused on the role of university supervisors, such as facilitating students' admission to schools, documenting reports, motivating students to engage in research and teaching, and providing guidance for action research. The results indicated that 24.8% of students rated the supervisor's role as excellent, 38.3% as good, 15% as moderate, 11.3% as weak, and 10.5% as very weak.

The Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 48.37$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$) showed significant differences between the observed and expected frequencies. This finding confirms the positive and meaningful contribution of supervisors to practicum implementation

All participants responded to these items, Figure 1 provides a comprehensive view of how the role of academic supervisor was experienced during the internship.

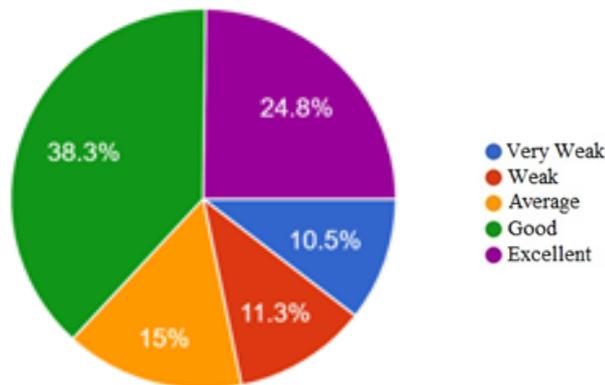


Figure 1. Illustrates the distribution of students' evaluations regarding the role of the university supervisor

Question 2: How do students perceive the role of the mentor teacher in the implementation of the internship?

Out of the 31 questions presented, 13 items were related to the role of the mentor teacher. These included familiarizing students with methods of involving parents in their children's education, increasing students' interest in the teaching profession, welcoming students into their own classrooms, transferring teaching skills in the real classroom setting, guiding, participating in, and properly implementing the internship unit, conveying internship content, influencing students' achievement of internship goals, being influenced by in-service training courses, and introducing students to the use of educational technology in teaching.

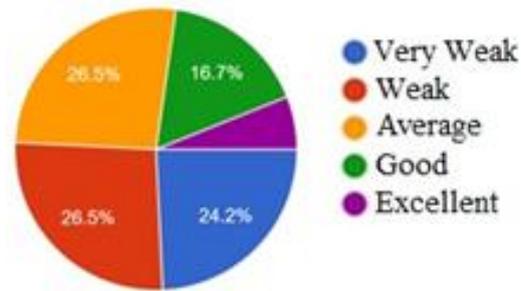


Figure 2. presents the distribution of students' evaluations regarding the role of mentor teachers in practicum implementation.

1.6% of students rated the role of the mentor teacher as excellent, 16.7% as good, 26.5% as average, 26.5% as weak, and 24.2% as very weak. Therefore, 70.7% evaluated the role of the mentor teacher as weak.

The Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 31.90$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$) confirmed the weakness of this dimension, highlighting that the majority of students were dissatisfied with mentor teachers' contributions.

Question 3: To what extent has the implemented internship brought students closer to educational and developmental goals?

Out of the 31 questionnaire items, 9 were related to this question, including: improving students' communication skills with colleagues, designing appropriate teaching methods, enhancing students' public speaking skills, increasing students' receptiveness to criticism, promoting students' participation, fostering flexibility, understanding students and their learning difficulties, improving classroom management skills, and encouraging creativity and initiative.

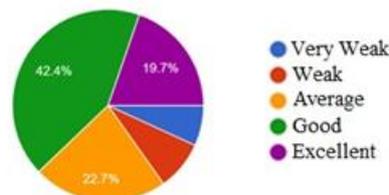


Figure 3. demonstrates students' evaluations of the practicum's contribution to achieving educational and training objectives.

The findings indicated that 19.7% of students rated the practicum's impact as excellent, 42.4% as good, 22.7% as moderate, 8.3% as weak, and 6.8% as very weak. Overall, 73.1% of participants considered the practicum successful in achieving its intended objectives.

Conclusion

The future of the country lies in the hands of its children, and educational programs play a significant role in shaping and nurturing them. A crucial part of teacher development depends on internship, thus requiring special attention. Research indicates that the current internship program

at Farhangian University is approved by experts. However, the results regarding its implementation vary and are generally evaluated as weak.

Academic supervisors and mentor teachers are the two main pillars of internship implementation. The most significant issue concerning academic supervisors is their insufficient mastery of the internship course, a point highlighted in previous studies as well. At the beginning of each semester, orientation sessions for academic supervisors are held; therefore, more attention should be paid to the quality and structure of these sessions, and participation should be made mandatory.

Moreover, the nature of the internship course requires instructors with academic expertise in the relevant field and proficiency in teaching methods and techniques. It is recommended that this course be taught by two instructors—one specialized in the subject area and the other in educational sciences—as was the case during the early years of Farhangian University's establishment.

Regarding mentor teachers, the main issue is their lack of acceptance of student-teachers in the classroom and failure to establish communication with them. It is therefore expected that, similar to medical universities having educational treatment centers, schools affiliated with Farhangian University be designated for internship purposes. The administrative staff and teachers should be properly briefed to collaborate with and accept student-teachers.

According to student statements and the findings related to the third research question, the internship plays a significant role in achieving educational and developmental goals and is highly effective in reducing students' stress when facing real teaching situations.

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