



WWJMRD 2022; 8(02): 92-99
www.wwjmr.com
International Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal
Refereed Journal
Indexed Journal
Impact Factor SJIF 2017:
5.182 2018: 5.51, (ISI) 2020-
2021: 1.361
E-ISSN: 2454-6615

Dr. Srutirupa Panda
Lecturer in Education
Nabakrushna Choudhury
College of Teacher Education,
Angul Utkal University,
Odisha, India.

Virtual School Internship Program in Teacher Education Institutions during COVID -19 Pandemic Periods: Problems, Issues and Challenges

Dr. Srutirupa Panda

Abstract

Internship is a significant and compulsory part of teacher education system. However due to COVID 19 pandemic conditions, real school-based internship for B.Ed. course could not be organized since last two years in colleges of teacher education of Odisha as schools were closed and permission for internship organization was not possible at that time. Teacher education institutions have organized simulation-based internship programme during the pandemic and started planning about virtual mode of school-based B.Ed. internship organization. Virtual internship programme refers to technologically assisted distance teaching by trainee teachers for school students. The main purpose of the study was to identify problems, issues and challenges perceived by student teachers and secondary teacher educators on organization of virtual internship programme. Descriptive survey method was followed to conduct the study. About 80 B.Ed. students and 20 secondary teacher educators constitute the sample of the study. Two structured interview schedules were implemented to collect data from trainee B.Ed. students and secondary teacher educators of Utkal University, Odisha. Data was analyzed quantitatively. It was explored that maximum percentage of B.Ed. students (30%) have perceived lack of real classroom experience as the major problem for organizing virtual internship programme. Similarly maximum percentage (30%) of secondary teacher educators perceived Need of Technologically supported Learning Management System as the biggest issue that should be considered by teacher education institution. In addition to this maximum percentage of teacher educators have perceived (25%) techno-pedagogical skill-based training for teachers, teacher educators and secondary teachers as the main challenge to implement virtual internship programme in secondary teacher education programme. It is suggested that relevant learning management system software development, training programmes on techno-pedagogical skill must be implemented for prospective teachers, teachers and teacher educators in order to achieve success for school based Virtual Internship Programme for two-year B.Ed. course.

Keywords: Virtual School Internship, Teacher Education, Problems, Issues, Challenges.

Introduction

“Teacher education is vital in creating a pool of school teachers that will shape the next generation. Teacher preparation is an activity that requires multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, formation of dispositions and values, and development of practice under the best mentors. Teachers must be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions including tribal traditions, while also being well-versed in the latest advances in education and pedagogy”.

-National Education Policy (2020)

Teacher education plays crucial role for making effective citizenship of future. Proper teacher education is essential criteria for quality school and higher education system of country. National Education Policy 2020 has given great emphasis on reconstructing quality teacher education system recently. Both pre service and in service teacher education must be strengthened to prepare competent teachers for Indian society. NCTE Norm (2014) has given great thrust on field based practical experience, internship activities during pre-service teacher education programme such as DEL.Ed, B.Ed, Integrated B.Ed and M.Ed. Integrated BSc./B.A.B.Ed. course. School internship program is the compulsory and integral part of

Correspondence:

Dr. Srutirupa Panda
Lecturer in Education
Nabakrushna Choudhury
College of Teacher Education,
Angul Utkal University,
Odisha, India.

teacher education system. It provides first hand practical experience to student teachers on classroom teaching, teaching learning material preparation, assessment and evaluation work, research activities, field data activities, organization of co-curricular and extracurricular activities such as celebration of cultural and national festivals, sports, functions in school, clerical work, administrative work, community work, handling students' issues and student support services etc. During internship program prospective teachers has to deliver certain numbers of lesson in real school-based classroom situation where they practically interact with students and understand the real teaching learning environment as well as practice teaching skills initially. However, due to first, second and third wave of COVID 19 and its mutational variants and Omicron pandemic situation, schools remained closed in Indian educational scenario realizing its hazardous impact on children. This condition created a big problem and challenge to teacher education system to organize internship program for novice prospective teachers. It is found that many prospective teachers are disappointed and worried about their school internship program due to the outbreak of Covid -19. In order to complete the degree of pre service teacher education program such as B.Ed., it is mandatory for each student to complete internship in the school.

As per the New Indian Express Report, Coimbatore (Published on 15th April 2021) Student teachers have expressed their frustration by stating that they are unable to get real school Internship Training program due to Covid 19 pandemic. However, in such unique condition, use of virtual internship plan of action has been implemented by various teacher education institutions of India which has emerged as an alternative solution to this problem.

Virtual School Internship Program

Internship can be defined as: "a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Virtual internship program refers to the work experience program where intern or participants gains experience while working in a remote professional setting and is not physically present at the real job location. Virtual interns have to communicate with their trainers and other stakeholders through Learning Management System, various online means such as skype, whats app, Google Meet, Zoom meet, instant messaging, phone conversation, webinars, skype, project management tools, SMS messaging as well as through various social media based technology etc. Several studies offer theoretically-based, qualitative claims as to the specific value of virtual internships, and others frame them as mechanisms for promoting public goods. Scholars have claimed that virtual internships offer greater access for previously excluded groups and spread internship opportunities more equally across geographical and social boundaries. Virtual internships can help interns to obtain work experience with employers of their choice despite their location, potential disabilities that may place limits on their mobility and other (e.g., family or employment) obligations. Benefits to employers include accessing such talent from outside of their geographical region and being able to take on more interns than their space would normally permit. The main differences that they find in

virtual internships are in the realm of communication, and even here they state that "e - internships have been praised for providing excellent opportunities for practicing and enhancing communication skills" (Jeske & Axtell, 2014, p. 462). This opportunity does emerge from the need to effectively adapt to the challenges of remote communication, such as team members being spread across time zones and needing to take extra measures to ensure team members are emotionally connected and feel supported while communicating solely via computer. Low (2008) determined that students, who struggled due to unfamiliarity with the work place in the field of physical therapy, experienced an overall positive outcome through an integrated Web CT-based internship. Kruse et al. (2013) explored the use of technology in a study of music majors, finding that use of online media narrowed the gap and provided actual face-to-face virtual internship encounters that engaged the students. Pike (2015) found that virtual internships for teachers helped them to develop greater pedagogical skills that greatly enhanced their classroom experience. Smith (2015) evaluated a blended internship for communications interns that tested for high levels of satisfaction.

Virtual School Internship program for teacher education can be defined as an internship program carried out by technologically assisted learning management system-based software through which student teachers can interact with real classroom students and use relevant facilities of learning resources such as books, video, picture, white board as well as get opportunity to help learners to construct their knowledge from a virtual classroom environment.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to

1. Find problems perceived by B.Ed. student teachers on virtual internship program during Covid 19 pandemic.
2. Explore issues perceived by secondary teacher educators on virtual internship program implementation in teacher education institutions during Covid 19 pandemic.
3. Identify challenges perceived by secondary teacher educators those need to be overcome by teacher education institutions in order to implement virtual internship program effectively during Covid19 pandemic period.

Research Questions

Research questions for the present study are:

- What are the problems faced by B.Ed. student teacher while attending virtual internship program during covid 19 pandemic?
- What are the issues associated with implementing virtual internship program for B.Ed. students as per the perception of secondary teacher educators?
- What are the challenges, teacher education institutions need to overcome for implementing effective virtual internship program during Covid19 pandemic according to the perception of secondary teacher educators?

Delimitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to the two-year B.Ed. students and secondary teacher educators of Odisha only.

2. The study was limited two College of Teacher Education (Nalini Devi Womens' College of Teacher Education, Bhubaneswar and Nabakrushna Choudhury College of Teacher Education, Angul) and One Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (Radhanath IASE) under Utkal University.

Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative (descriptive survey) methods were followed for the study. All the two B.Ed. student teachers as well as secondary teacher educators of Odisha constitute the population of the this study. A sample of eighty (40 males and 40 females) B.Ed. student teachers and twenty secondary teacher educators (10 male and 10 female) selected randomly for the present investigation. Researcher developed two structured Interview schedules to collect data from two-year B.Ed. student teachers as well as from secondary teacher educators.

- First Interview schedule was meant for exploring problems perceived by two-year B.Ed. students on virtual internship program.
- Second interview schedule was meant for secondary teacher educators for exploring issues and challenges for implementing virtual internship program for two-year B.Ed. students.

The investigator collected data personally by meeting the student teachers and secondary teacher educator as well as

by organizing telephonic interview strategy. It took approximately three months to collect data from said sample during April 2021 to June 2021 when second wave of Covid 19 affected Odisha state of India.

Result and Discussion

After collecting the data, it was analyzed. First objectives of the study were to explore problems perceived by B.Ed. student teachers on virtual internship program. It was found that students have identified following problems related to virtual internship program during Covid 19 pandemic. Students have stated various obstacles in such virtual mode of internship activities such as:

- Lack of real classroom experience in teaching
- Problems of irregular attendance
- Lack of internet facility
- In adequate time allotment to trainee teachers by school
- Non cooperating of school teachers
- Incomplete lessons
- Lack of interest of trainee teachers towards virtual mode of Internship
- Lack of interest on the part of school students for online learning due to "all pass" announcement
- Ineffective online school internship program
- Negative attitude of students towards virtual internship

Table 1: Major Problems Perceived by Student Teachers in Percentage for Virtual Internship Program.

Serial No.	Major Problem Criteria Identified by Student Teachers for Virtual Internship Program	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
1	Lack of real classroom experience in teaching	24	30
2	Problems of irregular attendance	4	5
3	Lack of internet facility and training	6	7.5
4	In adequate time allotment to trainee teachers by school	2	2.5
5	Non-cooperation of school teachers	8	10
6	Incomplete lessons	4	5
7	Lack of interest of trainee teachers towards virtual mode of Internship	12	15
8	Lack of interest on the part of school students	13	16.25
9	Ineffective online school internship programme	4	5
10	Negative attitude of students towards virtual internship	3	3.75
	Total	80	100

Maximum percentage (30%) students have identified lack of real classroom environment in virtual internship as a major problem for its implementation. They have expressed their consciousness over missing real teaching learning environment what is important for practical internship program in school. Next to this problem second major problem identified by student teachers was Lack of interest on the part of school students (16.25%). After it the major problem identified by student teachers was Lack of interest of trainee teachers towards virtual mode of Internship (15%). Some student teachers find virtual internship not interesting one. However 10% of student teaches assumed non-cooperation of school teachers as a problem that can affect internship program. Student teachers also emphasized on the problem of internet facility and lack of proper training on virtual internship (7.5%). Some students

identified problem of irregular attendanance on the part of school students (5%). Around 5% of student teachers considered virtual internship program as ineffective. It denotes that virtual internship program can be successful if it would be associated with more interesting softwares, technology for student interaction/participation, whiteboard, demonstration and assessment purpose. Also, around 5% students expressed their anxiety over problem related to incomplete lesson in virtual mode of internship program. It is also explored that some student teachers (3.75%) identified negative attitude of trainees as a problem for achieving the goals of virtual internship program. About 2.5% of student teachers were concerned about problems related to in adequate time allotment to trainee teachers by school.

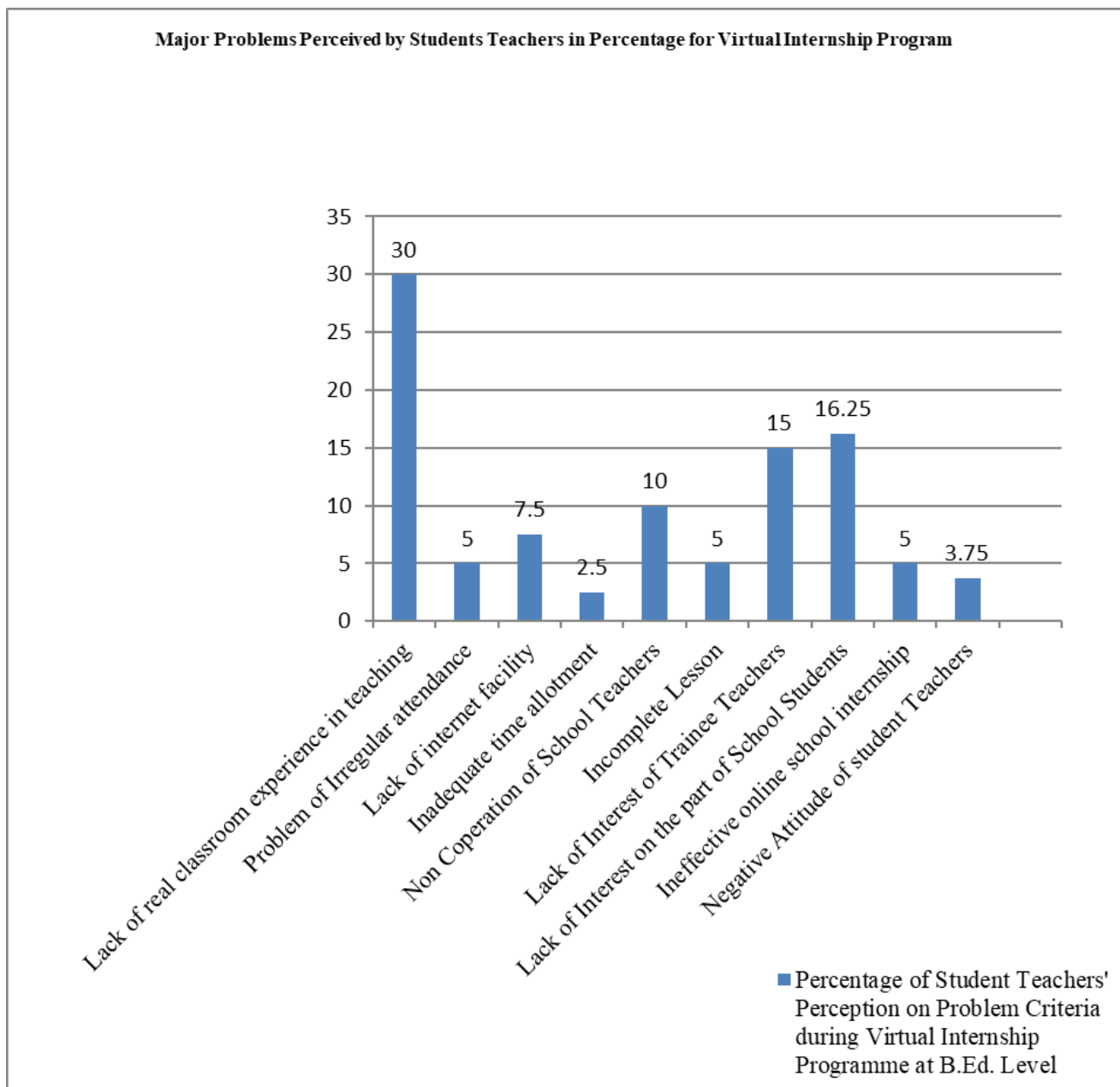


Chart 1: Major Problems Perceived by Student Teachers in Percentage for Virtual Internship Program.

Issues of Virtual Internship Program

Internship is the most important part of any teacher education program. It gives pupil-teachers hands-on experience to be acquainted with total school practice including but such internship program with virtual mode is having various issues and challenges concerning the quality of training program. There are many questions arising with respect to teacher education institutions regarding how to organize virtual internship program during COVID 19

pandemic period when schools are closed. What are the significant issues associated with virtual internship program for B.Ed. students? Researcher tried to explore various issues associated with virtual internship program from 20 secondary teachers’ educators who are working in college of teacher education (CTE) and Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE) under Utkal University, Odisha who identified following issues associated with virtual internship program.

Table 2: Major Issues Perceived by Secondary Teacher Educators in Percentage for Virtual Internship Program.

Serial No.	Major Issues Identified by Secondary Teacher Educators for Virtual Internship Program	Number of Teacher Educators	Percentage of Teacher Educators
1	Need of Technologically supported Learning Management System	6	30
2	Lesson Planning	4	20
3	Supervision by Teacher Educators	3	15
4	School Permission Issue	3	15
5	Issues related to Use of Teaching Learning Materials	2	10
6	Issues related to Assessment and Evaluation	1	5
7	Miscellaneous Issues	1	5
	Total	20	100

- **Need of Technologically supported Learning Management System:** Most of the teacher educators (30%) opined that there is a need of good learning management system based softwares for organizing a virtual internship program. These softwares must have good quality of video, audio, interaction facilities, message facilities, teaching learning resources. There are various apps and web based platforms like ZOOM Cloud Meeting, Google Hangouts, Webex Meet, Skype Meetings etc on which a virtual classroom can be made for imparting education. Thus teachers teach and the students learn in real-time, face to face but via web based technology devices.
- **Lesson Planning:** Preparation of learning design at pre-teaching phase is a vital tool of trainee-teachers. Virtual internship calls for techno-pedagogy based learning design where due importance is given to TPAK (i.e. Technological Knowledge, Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Knowledge) on which the learning design for teaching is to be prepared. About 20% teacher educators have given strong emphasis on developing techno pedagogical skills of trainee teachers before implementing virtual internship program for B.Ed. students.
- **School Permission Issue:** Around 15% teacher educators considered school permission for organizing virtual internship program. Hence teacher education institutions can take permission from concerned school authorities to organize such an innovative endeavor during such COVID 19 encounter. In this concern parents, teachers, school administrators must be properly informed and trained for encouraging and preparing school students to participate in virtual internship program.
- **Supervision by Teacher Educators:** It is found that 15% of teacher educators raised the issues of online supervision. However, classroom teaching given by trainee-teachers must be supervised by teacher-educators. Here, any teacher-educator can enter in the classroom through web link which is to be notified to him/her at earlier. In the same way, the Head Teacher

or Subject Teachers of schools can join in the classroom for supervising their teaching practice.

- **Issues related to Use of Teaching Learning Materials:** Some teacher educators (10%) raised issues of using teaching learning materials in virtual internship program by trainee teachers as delivering lesson through teaching-learning-materials is inevitable part of teaching. However, trainee-teachers can switch on share screen option for displaying power point, videos, photographs, diagram, pictures, sketches etc to students in respect to the given topic.
- **Issues related to Assessment and Evaluation:** Around 5% teacher educators felt issues of assessment evaluation as a major one by student teachers during virtual internship program. For this purpose, online test can be planned for the students in respect of examining their learning outcome. Learning tasks can be scheduled for them and evaluation can be done virtually. Students can also express their learning outcome in creativity based productive forms like painting, collage making, singing, reciting, video production and the like.
- **Miscellaneous Issues:** It is explored that some teacher educators (5%) concerned with the other issues during virtual internship program such as action research, school based activities, field work, co-curricular activities in school as well as training on educational management and administration. All the above activities are essential for practitioners to develop the professional competence among interns. Trainee-teachers as interns can also practice this virtually through video conferencing and online meeting tools. Student-teachers can organize a parent –teachers meeting virtually. When they require attending a meeting with head teacher and other teachers, it can be scheduled here easily. Video conferencing can be used for sharing knowledge of senior and experienced teachers in respect of creating more effective classroom teaching. Schools can build their web pages and update their daily practices which can be referred by teacher education institutions.

Major Issues Perceived by Secondary Teacher Educators for Virtual Internship Program in Percentage

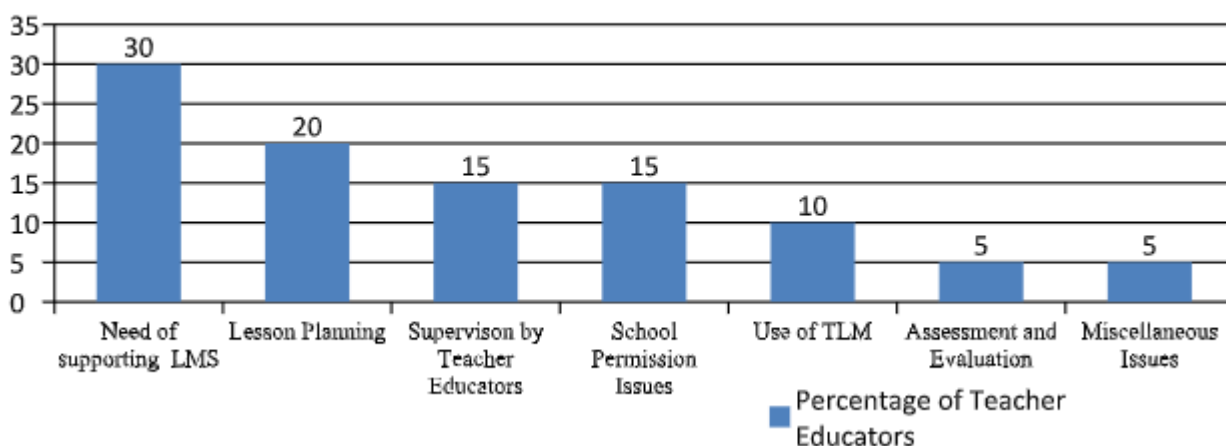


Chart 2: Major Issues Perceived by Secondary Teacher Educators in Percentage for Virtual Internship Program.

Challenges in Virtual Internship Program

The third objectives of the study were to explore various challenges of organizing virtual internship program from

secondary teacher educators. Data from sample was collected and analyzed qualitatively. In order to implement virtual internship for trainee teachers, various challenges

can be faced by the teacher education institutions. It is explored that some challenges perceived by secondary

teacher educators in this concern. Those challenges can be enlisted as follows

Table 3: Major Challenges Perceived by Secondary Teacher Educators in Percentage for Virtual Internship Program.

Serial No.	Major Challenges identified by Secondary Teacher Educators for Virtual Internship Program	Number of Teacher Educators	Percentage of Teacher Educators
1	Techno-pedagogical skill-based training	5	25
2	Building software technology-based Learning management System for Virtual Internship	4	20
3	Technological support/Internet support	3	15
4	Infrastructural and Financial facility	3	15
5	Preparation of standard guidelines from NCTE/UGC	2	10
6	Support and Good coordination between Teachers, Teacher educators, students, parents and administrators	2	10
7	Development of Encouragement and Motivation among each stakeholder for Virtual Internship Programme	1	5
	Total	20	100

- **Techno-pedagogical skill-based training for teachers, teacher educators and secondary teachers:** Techno – pedagogical skill refers to integration of teaching skill with technology. Techno-pedagogical *skills* are those *skills* needed to use technology for pedagogical reasons and the competence to integrate technology into teaching. Maximum percentage (25%) secondary teacher educators considered major challenge for organizing virtual internship program for B.Ed. students is Techno-pedagogical skill-based training for teachers, teacher educators and secondary teachers. They expressed serious concerns for developing skills and competencies related to technology assisted teaching among student teachers, teacher educators, secondary school teachers.
- **Building software technology for school internship program:** The second major challenges with respect to virtual internship were building software technology for school internship program. Around 20% secondary teacher educators considered it is most difficult task to build learning management system-based software for virtual internship program within short span of time during COVID 19 pandemic...
- **Technological support /Internet support:** About 15% of teacher educators have opined that the biggest challenge for teacher education institution to organize virtual internship program is easily accessible technological support and internet facility to student teachers and secondary school students. They argued about underprivileged technological facility and poor internet connection to rural and remote area considered that these factors as a great challenge for implementing virtual internship program.
- **Infrastructural facility and financial support:** Some teacher educators (15%) perceived inadequate infrastructural and financial facility as the biggest challenge for organizing virtual Internship Program. According to them setting computer lab, providing relevant quality of Learning Management System, equipments, computer will not be enough cost effective rather it would be quite challenging for

teacher education system to provide proper infrastructural and financial support for organizing virtual internship program.

- **Preparation of standard guidelines, norms and rules:** About 10% of teacher educators perceived preparation of standard guidelines, norms and rules by National level agencies as the major challenge for organizing virtual Internship Program. They opined that in order to implement virtual school internship program, standard rule and regulations must be framed by National level accreditation agencies such as National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), University Grants Council (UGC) and state level Higher Education Department in these issues.
- **Support training college administration, school administration and parents and good coordination between trainee teachers, school teachers, teacher educators, students and parents:** It is explored that about 10% teacher educators have perceived that maintenance of support and coordination among various stakeholders such as college and school administrators, parents, teachers, teacher educators would be more challenging during virtual internship program. As per their view, more confusion, misunderstanding and dilemma would be created through virtual mode of interaction during internship program.
- **Development of Encouragement and Motivation among each stakeholder to attain success in virtual school internship program:** Minimum percentage (5%) of teacher educators perceived that it would be more challenging for teacher education institute to develop and sustain encouragement and motivation among each stakeholder to attain success during virtual internship program. They argued that it would be difficult to create interest for the virtual internship program among student teachers, teacher educators, students, parents and administrators. They may be reluctant for participating in such type of novice experience and might support for organizing real practical internship program at the field to which they are mostly familiar.

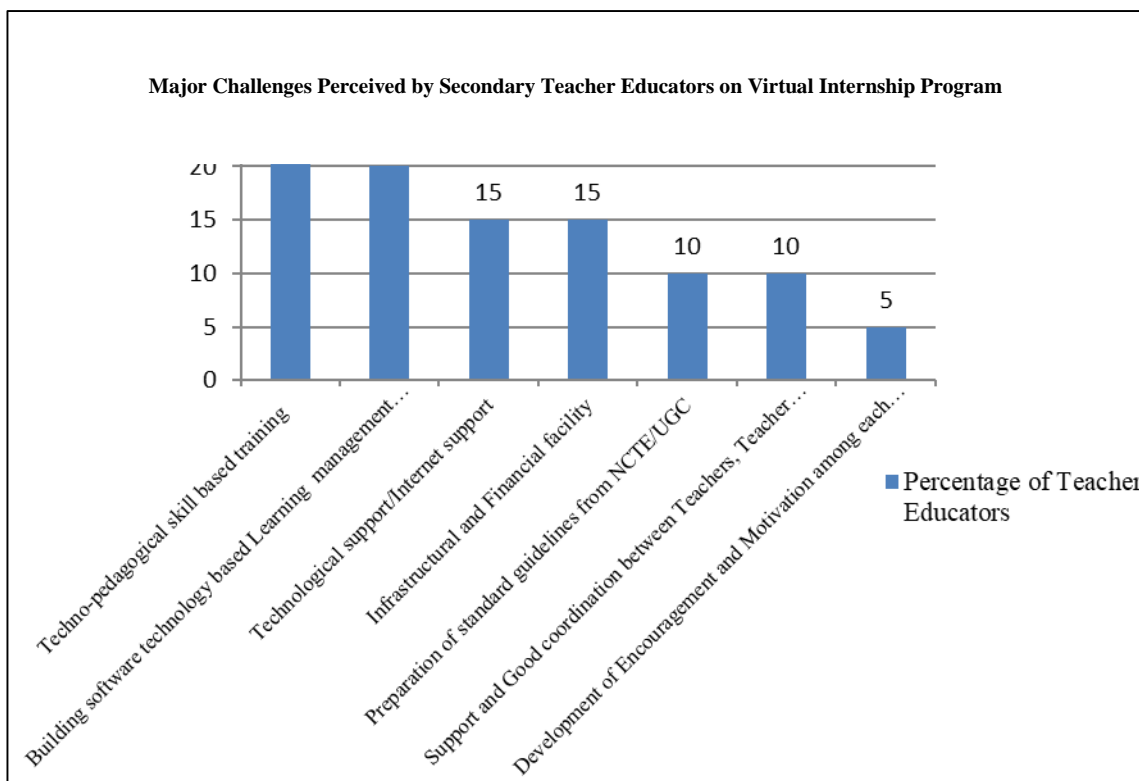


Chart 3: Major Challenges Perceived by Secondary Teacher Educators in Percentage for Virtual Internship Program.

Major Findings

Major findings of the study are

1. Maximum percentage of B.Ed. students (30%) has perceived lack of real classroom experience as the major problem for organizing virtual internship program.
2. Maximum percentage (30%) of secondary teacher educators perceived Need of Technologically supported Learning Management System as the biggest issue that should be considered by teacher education institution.
3. Maximum percentage of teacher educators have perceived (25%) Techno-pedagogical skill-based training for teachers, teacher educators and secondary teachers as the main challenge to implement virtual internship programme in secondary teacher education program.
4. Minimum percentage (2.5%) of student teachers perceived inadequate time allotment to trainee teachers by school is the major problem for organizing
5. Minimum percentage (5%) of secondary teacher educators perceived miscellaneous issues are important for Virtual school Internship Programme. Virtual school Internship Program.
6. Minimum percentage (5%) of secondary teacher educators perceived Development of Encouragement and Motivation among each stakeholder is the major challenge for Virtual school Internship Program.

Conclusion

Virtual School Internship program can be considered as an alternative tool to achieve essential practical objectives of teacher education institutions during COVID 19 pandemic condition when we are facing lock down or closed school situations. However there exist various problems, issues and challenges to make virtual school internship practically implemented at school level effectively. Teacher trainees

need to well acquaint with theory and practical parts of Information and Communication Technology in Education in order to gain practical competencies in Techno pedagogical skills for online internship activities. It is beyond doubt to state that virtual school internship can be one of the innovative ways to implement online education program during COVID 19 pandemic through distance education as well as it can enhance techno pedagogical skills of novice teachers. It is suggested that relevant learning management system software development, training programs on techno-pedagogical skill must be implemented for prospective teachers, teachers and teacher educators in order to achieve success for school based Virtual Internship Program for two-year B.Ed. course Further research and innovations are very essential to make Virtual school Internship program qualitative, successful and effective.

References

1. Jeske, D., & Axtell, C.M. (2014). e-Internships: Prevalence, characteristics, and role of student perspectives. *Internet Research*, 24(4), 457-473. 10.1108/IntR-11-2012-0226.
2. Kruse, N. B., Harlos, S. C., Callahan, R. M., & Herring, M. (2013). Skype music lessons in the academy: Intersections of music education, applied music and technology. *Journal of Music, Technology & Education*, 6(1), 43-60.
3. Low, S. (2008). Supporting student learning during physical therapist student internships using online technology. *Journal of Physical Therapy Education*, 22(1), 75-82.
4. National Education Policy-2020, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi
5. Pike, P. (2015). Using a synchronous online teaching internship to develop pedagogical skills and explore

- teacher identity: A case study. *Journal of Music, Technology & Education*, 8 (3), 227-242. doi:10.1386/jmte.8.3.227_1
6. Roy, J., and Sykes, D., (2017). A review of Internship Opportunities in Online Learning: Building a new Conceptual Framework for a Self-Regulated Internship in Hospitality. *International Journal of E-Learning & Distance Education*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2017
 7. Smith, C. M. (2015). Implementing and evaluating a blended learning format in the communication internship course. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Innovations in Practice*, 14, 217-235. Retrieved from
 8. <http://www.jite.org/documents/Vol14/JITEv14IIPp217-235Smith1850.pdf>
 9. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2021/apr/15/covid-impacts-internship-of-bed-students-2290244.html>
 10. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/bed-students-to-do-school-internship-in-virtual-mode/articleshow/84530493.cms>