

Evaluation of English Language Teaching and Linguistics Program: A Case Study of Punjab University

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Abstract

The aim of this case study was to evaluate the Master of Arts in English Language teaching and Linguistics (MA ELTL) Program being offered by Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of the Punjab since 2003. English is taught as a compulsory subject up to graduation level and holds a central position in education system of Pakistan. The results of students in secondary, higher secondary and graduation level exams showed poor condition in English subject reflecting poor quality of learning English which is dependent on quality of teachers. The quality of English teachers depends on the quality and effectiveness of teacher education program. However, the quality of teacher education program becomes a prime determinant for quality of learning. Among various aspects of program quality, level of preparedness of its prospective teachers is most widely used feature. Therefore, this evaluative case study was planned to investigate preparedness level of prospective teachers in 20 domains identified through literature as essential components of a quality teacher education program. The prospective teachers of final semester (PTFS) and alumni of the MA ELTL program rated their level of preparedness to teach in real world classrooms after receiving training through this program. The instruments; a self-reported survey questionnaire from PTFS and alumni's (N=196) as well as an observation schedule of 20 PTFS to observe their classroom practices were used. Findings showed that PTFS and alumni were moderately prepared in instruction, curriculum, professionalism, and English language teaching skills. The study recommended that duration and quality of practice teaching should be improved. Prospective teachers must be trained to apply theoretical knowledge into practical teaching under the guidance of instructors.

Keywords: Program Evaluation, English Language Teaching, Level of Preparedness, Teacher Education

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Introduction

Language plays an important role in developing understanding and making concepts clear (Al-Issa, 2017). Literature evidently showed that foreign language creates hindrance in conceptualization of novel concepts and teaching-learning process, compromising conceptual clarity of the students (Cook, 2008). English is an international language that has a pivotal position in education system of Pakistan (Panzai & Channa, 2017). Although our national language is Urdu but English, traverses through whole education system as a 'compulsory subject' from class one to graduation level. In Pakistan, English is taught as a second language and students' achievement scores are generally low, which is very common for all students studying at different levels (Saeed, 2007). A representative of Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) reported to the National Assembly Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat that quality of education in the country declined so alarmingly, that out of 9642 students who appeared in Central Superior Services (CSS) exams in year 2016, ninety two percent (92%) failed in English (Sarwar, 2016).

Since the establishment of Pakistan, several attempts have been made to address teacher education programs through different reforms; like curriculum change, innovative pedagogies, and teacher trainings but no major change is evident in the system. Improving the quality of teacher education programs is one of the most important reforms for improvement of education (Ferretti & Hiebert, 2018; Khan & Saeed, 2010). Therefore, we need well-prepared English teachers through effective English Teacher Education Programs of high quality. Researchers believe that continuous evaluation is necessary and it can improve the effectiveness of teacher education programs (Aldradi, 2015; Armstrong State University, 2016).

Khan (2004) believes that our teacher education programs have poor level of curriculum and instruction. Therefore, they are meagerly useful in producing quality teachers. Anees (2005) found in his study on teacher education that course content rarely reflects the latest knowledge and future orientation. Aldradi (2015) evaluated the quality of English language programs in the Libyan universities and found decline in language skills, inadequate library resources, and lack of training workshops for staff, as well as other learning and teaching facilities.

In purview of the above, there is a dire need to conduct an in-depth investigation of the effectiveness of M.A. ELTL program. This program started in 2003 with the objective of "providing professionally trained English teachers" with specialized training of language teaching at University of the Punjab. By training pre-service English language teachers through this program, the performance and achievement level of their students can be improved in the subject of English. The literature on program evaluation studies revealed that there must be continuous evaluation of a program after every three to five years (Aldradi, 2015; Khan & Saeed, 2010). Since inception of M.A ELTL program there has not been any formal evaluation research on it. After almost sixteen years of launching this program, it is pertinent to determine the level to which it has achieved its objectives. This demands to revisit this program through an evaluative research of MA ELTL program.

Significance and Scope of Teacher Education

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was the best of all creations yet he proudly proclaimed himself as a teacher. Therefore, undoubtedly teaching is a sacred profession. Teacher is the harbinger of change, progress, and prosperity for a nation, but preparing good teachers is a very challenging and stimulating job (Tuzlukova, Al Busaidi, Burns, & Bugon, 2018). Teacher education is considered as bedrock of national development (Ferretti & Hiebert, 2018). A teacher needs certain attitudes and different kinds of proficiencies to become a good teacher. In these days, the demands on teachers and teacher education programs are very high. It is pertinent to mention here that objectives and scope of different teacher education programs are not the same in all countries of the world but depends on the social context, economy, history, and culture of the country (Asmali, 2018).

English Language Teacher Education in Pakistan

In Pakistan, English is considered as a gateway to success and a source of getting white collared jobs. Although the upper stratum of society uses it as a status symbol but at the same time, it is the language of higher education, science, and research (Panzai & Channa, 2017). The literature reveals that one important factor that can be helpful in improving the quality of education, is teacher (Al-Issa, 2017; Ferretti & Hiebert, 2018; Tuzlukova et al., 2018). Therefore, great and prosperous nations of the world lay a lot of stress on the education and training of their teachers. Researchers agree that preparation of quality teachers is an important step towards improving the quality of students' education (Asmali, 2018; Brown & Crumpler, 2013).

A quality teacher education program can prepare quality teachers. An English teacher needs to have a thorough content knowledge of English as a subject as well as methods of teaching English effectively to the students (Farukh, Mirza, Chaudhri & Nawaz, 2005). In other words, an effective English teacher must be equipped with all the methods, skills, and techniques, which are necessary for this profession. The objective of English Teacher Education is to provide all the knowledge and skills that are necessary for the teaching profession (Asmali, 2018).

Components of Program Quality

Teacher Education Institutions continuously face the challenge of making sure that their educational programs have the necessary components to produce well-prepared and effective teachers (Armstrong, 2007). Therefore, Teacher Education Institutions have this huge responsibility to identify these necessary components of effective teacher education programs through empirical research and use them to build their programs based on those best practices (Armstrong, 2007; Armstrong State University, 2016; Knorr & Medford, 2013; Mohan, 2011; Natesan et al., 2010). With the Advent of Standard Based Curriculum in Pakistan since 2006 now, it is indispensable for teacher education institutions to produce quality teachers to meet those standards (Government of Pakistan, 2009). This is the high time to conduct an empirical study of M.A ELTL program by measuring the level of preparedness of its graduates, and see how effectively it provides necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to its prospective teachers in core areas of program quality; instruction, curriculum, professionalism and English language skills.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to evaluate the quality of M.A. ELTL program in terms of curriculum, instruction, professionalism, and English language skills.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of preparedness of PTFS of M.A. ELTL program in the core areas of curriculum, instruction, professionalism, and English language skills?
2. What do the alumni of M.A. ELTL program consider about their level of preparedness in curriculum, professionalism, instruction, and English language skills?

Methodology

Design of the Study

Mix method approach was used followed by convergent Parallel Mixed Methods in this case study. It comprised simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data on the same phenomena, both types of data were then converged, analyzed and interpreted for triangulation and better understanding of the problem (Edmonds, & Kennedy, 2017; Kalaiyaran, 2017). The process and procedure of the study best presented through figure 1.

The case study design was adopted because it is very useful for in-depth investigation (Carter, 2018). The program of English language teaching and linguistics was opted as a unique case in this study.

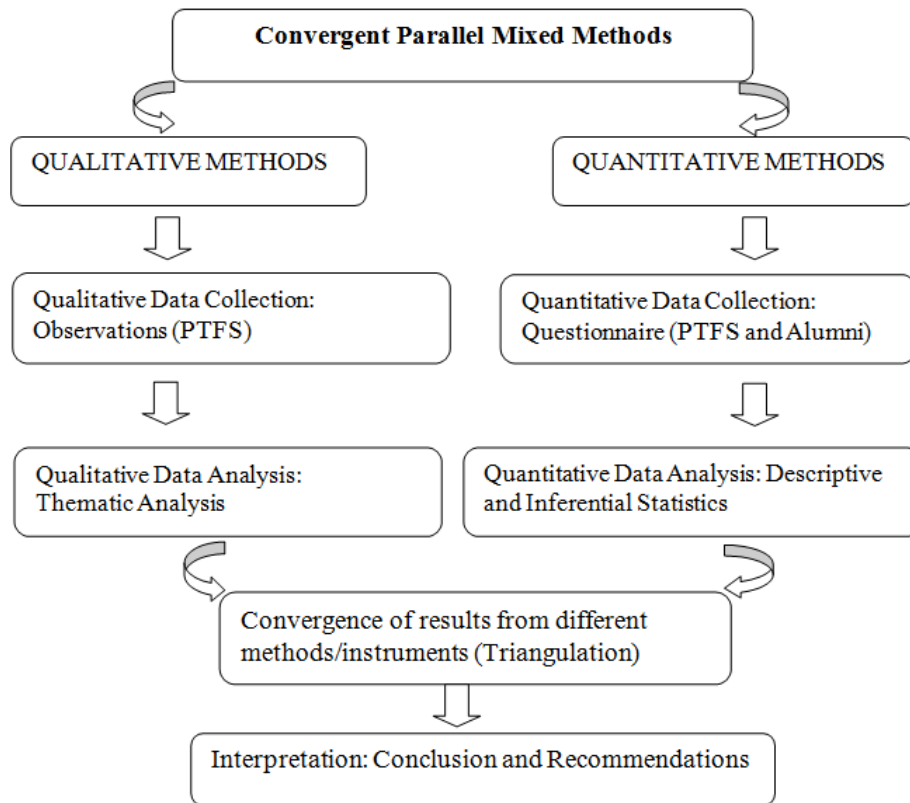


Figure 1: Design of the study

Population

MA ELTL program of IER, university of the Punjab was a source of our population in this case study. It is an evaluative case study of program, which includes all instructors, prospective teachers currently studying and alumni were population of this study.

Sampling of the study

The PTFS, near to completion of their degree program were selected as a sample of this study because they had full exposure of teaching-learning process and could provide valuable firsthand information about the M.A ELTL program. The last semester consisted of 69 PTFS of M.A ELTL program studying at IER in year 2019. All of them were selected as a sample on census basis. Later on 62 PTFS and 134 alumni gave their consent and filled their questionnaires (N=196). Moreover, 20 PTFS were also randomly selected for observations during their practice teaching (PT) at different schools.

Instrumentation

Two adapted instruments, a questionnaire, and an observation schedule were used in this study.

Table 1. Detailed Description of Instrument

Sr.#	Factors/ Core Components	Scope	Example	Items#	Reliability
1.	Instruction	The components of program quality	Ability to manage the classroom	9	0.70

2.	Curriculum	The curriculum design and content	Knowledge of curriculum design	5	0.66
3.	Professionalism	The continuing professional growth	Willingness of teachers to participate in professional development	3	0.82
4.	English Language Skills	Quality of English teaching	Ability to teach English listening skills	6	0.89

A questionnaire is suitable for dispersed respondents (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012) therefore, Armstrong Survey of Teacher Program Effectiveness (2007) was used to investigate the quality of M.A. ELTL program after adaptation and contextual incorporations. It was, initially designed to explore level of preparedness in three core areas of program quality that were, (1) instruction, (2) curriculum, and (3) professionalism (Table 1). I reviewed the instrument and added a fourth dimension namely, (4) English Language Skills (Table 1). The instrument was validated by five educational experts, and pilot tested. The overall reliability of questionnaire was 0.916. The author of the instrument gave consent to use it even allowed to modify the questionnaire.

An adapted version of Observation Schedule of Middle East Technical University, Turkey (Sahin, 2006) was also used. It initially consisted of six factors that were, (1) the classroom *Resources*, (2) instructor's personal qualities, (3) appropriacy of English language, (4) preparation, (5) execution, and (6) classroom management. In the light of careful literature review, local needs, I revised the instrument and added three other factors (7) motivation, (8) engagement, and (9) Islamic ethical values (Table 4). The instrument was, validated by five experts, in 2018.

Date Collection and Analysis

The data was collected form PTFS and alumni of MA ELTL program of IER. The researcher went to the classrooms of PTFS, explained the nature and purpose of this research. The 62 PTFS filled the questionnaires voluntarily. The questionnaire was also uploaded on internet google forms and Facebook. After getting consents of alumni, the introductory letters were sent through e-mail and WhatsApp along with links of questionnaires. Later on, I observed 20 PTFS during their practice teaching (PT) at different schools of Lahore.

The data analysis based on responses of the PTFS and alumni was presented in terms of mean scores and standard deviation regarding core areas of the program. The analysis of the perceptions of alumni about their preparedness was made through descriptive statistics. At the end, data collected through observation schedule and questionnaire, were converged and compared, for triangulation and better understanding of the level of preparedness of PTFS and alumni of MA ELTL program.

Findings and Discussion

Perceptions of PTFS and Alumni about Core Areas

The first and second research questions inquire about the level of preparedness of PTFS and alumni of M.A. ELTL program in the core areas of curriculum, instruction, professionalism, and English language skills. Table 2 describes the perceptions of PTFS of MA ELTL program and its alumni, regarding their level of preparedness in core areas. Majority of PTFS and alumni believed that they were moderately prepared in all the four core areas of program quality. It is in line with previous study of Armstrong (2007b). This means that the PTFS and alumni were moderately satisfied with knowledge and skills received from MA ELTL program. The overall mean score ($M=3.62$) and the mean scores of each core area were greater than criterion mean of ($M=3.0$). The mean scores also indicate that PTFS and alumni were relatively more prepared in the core areas of 'Instruction' and

‘English Language Skills’ (M=3.61, M= 3.74) and relatively less prepared in the areas of ‘Curriculum’ and ‘Professionalism’ (M=3.57, M=3.56).

Table 2. Core Areas of Program Effectiveness

Core Areas	Mean	SD
Instruction	3.61	2.51
Curriculum	3.57	1.51
Professionalism	3.56	2.03
English Language Skills	3.74	1.92

Overall mean=3.62, Criterion Mean= 3.0, N=196

Preparedness Level of PTFS of MA ELTL program

Table 3 shows detailed description of the level of preparedness of PTFS of M.A. ELTL program, in instruction, curriculum, professionalism, and English language skills. The item wise analysis of ‘instruction’ indicates that level of preparedness of PTFS depends on their ability to perform nine tasks. It shows that PTFS were moderately prepared in all the nine abilities. While highest rated item was the ‘ability to motivate students’ (M=3.97). The evidence form the findings of Observation Schedule (Table 4) also corroborate the finding that PTFS have adequate motivational skills (M=3.10). The item wise analysis of ‘Curriculum’ shows that PTFS perceive themselves moderately prepared in the knowledge of all five items. However, the lowest rated item was ‘Knowledge of bridging the theory and practice through field based experiences’ (M=3.26) which indicate that PTFS feel relatively less prepared in the knowledge of bridging the gap between theory and practice. The highest rated item was ‘Knowledge of Islamic ethical values: such as equality, justice, brotherhood, tolerance and global peace’ (M=3.84). The item wise analysis of third core component ‘Professionalism’ depicts that PTFS considered themselves moderately prepared in all three items. In the fourth core component ‘English Language Skills’ participants considered themselves as moderately prepared in all the six statements but they feel relatively less prepared in ‘Ability to teach English speaking skills’ which was rated lowest (M=3.66) as compared to other English language teaching skills. The highest rated item was ‘Ability to teach English Grammar’ (M=3.86). The findings of Observation Schedule (Table 4) also corroborate the finding that PTFS have adequate skill of teaching English grammar (M=3.60).

Table 3. Item wise analysis of perceptions of preparedness level of M.A. ELTL, PTFS and alumni in the core areas through Questionnaire

Statements	PTFS		Alumni	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Instruction				
Ability to manage the Classroom	3.55	.74	3.52	1.05
Ability to engage students	3.81	.83	3.64	.87
Ability to make lesson-plans	3.69	.99	3.61	1.02
Ability to execute lesson-plans	3.74	.93	3.37	1.12
Ability to motivate the students	3.97	.97	3.82	1.02
Ability to address diversity in classroom	3.69	.86	3.56	1.08
Ability to teach at developmentally appropriate levels	3.47	.88	3.31	1.03
Ability to use relevant technology	3.77	.91	3.52	1.03
Ability to use alternative assessment	3.52	.94	3.35	1.07
Curriculum				
Knowledge of Curriculum Design	3.40	1.15	3.38	1.01
Knowledge of subject matter content	3.59	1.02	3.71	.98
Knowledge of instructional techniques	3.61	1.16	3.69	.82
Knowledge of bridging the theory and practice through field based experiences	3.26	1.01	3.43	1.01
Knowledge of Islamic ethical values: such as equality, justice, brotherhood, tolerance and global peace	3.84	1.07	3.75	1.00

Statements	PTFS		Alumni	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Professionalism				
Ability of teacher to collaborate with other teachers, parents, and administrators	3.66	1.10	3.55	1.08
Willingness of teachers to participate in professional development	3.50	.94	3.55	1.05
Ability of teachers to identify and utilize classroom and external resources	3.60	1.02	3.53	.99
English Language teaching Skills				
Ability to teach English listening skills	3.77	1.05	3.72	1.08
Ability to teach English speaking skills	3.66	1.19	3.75	1.04
Ability to teach English reading skills	3.82	1.00	3.78	1.03
Ability to teach English writing skills	3.75	1.13	3.66	1.06
Ability to teach English Grammar	3.86	1.02	3.77	1.06
Ability to teach usage of English Vocabulary	3.69	1.09	3.68	1.06

Preparedness Level of MA ELTL Alumni

The preparedness level of alumni of M.A. ELTL program was assessed. Item wise analysis of 'instruction' shows that level of preparedness of alumni of M.A. ELTL program depends on their capability to do nine different tasks (Table 3). It indicates that alumni were moderately prepared in above-mentioned nine abilities. Whereas 'ability to motivate the students' was the highest rated item (M=3.82). However, the lowest rated item was 'the ability to teach at developmentally appropriate levels' (M=3.31). It means that alumni felt relatively more prepared in motivational skills and relatively less prepared to teach their students according to their different levels of development. Item wise analysis of the 'Curriculum' demonstrates that alumni of MA ELTL consider themselves moderately prepared in the knowledge of all the five items. Here we see that the lowest rated item was 'knowledge of curriculum design' (M=3.38) which indicate that the alumni feel relatively less prepared in the art of designing curriculum. The 'knowledge of Islamic ethical values: such as justice, equality, brotherhood, global peace and tolerance' was highest rated item (M=3.75). It is pertinent to mention here that this was also the highest rated item by the final year students (M=3.84). The item wise analysis of 'Professionalism' shows that alumni considered themselves moderately prepared in all the three items (Table 3). In fourth core area of 'English language teaching skills', the alumni considered themselves 'moderately prepared' in all the six skills. However, they felt relatively more prepared in the ability to teach English Grammar and reading skills (M=3.77, M=3.78). It is in line with the findings of Observation Schedule (Table 4), as the PTFS were observed during practice teaching (PT) and it was found that they had 'adequate' ability of teaching English grammar and English reading skills (M=3.60, M=3.74).

Table 4. Item wise Analysis of preparedness level of PTFS of MA ELTL program during PT through Observation Schedule

Major Factors	Sub-Factors	PTFS	
		Mean	SD
Classroom Resources: (professionalism)	i. Arrangement and use of classroom resources	3.37	.68
	ii. Atmosphere	3.36	.59
	iii. Audio/ Noise level	2.80	1.11
Instructor's Personal qualities (Professionalism)	i. Presence	3.80	.51
	ii. Level of confidence	3.47	.48
	iii. Rapport	3.13	.55
	iv. Voice (Speaking skills)	3.72	.51
Appropriateness of English Language Skills	i. Sentence Structure / Syntax (Grammar)	3.60	.50
	ii. Vocabulary	3.22	.36
	iii. Register (Speaking skills)	3.70	.47
	iv. Pronunciation (Speaking skills)	3.34	.58
	v. Fluency (Speaking skills)	3.75	.37

Major Factors	Sub-Factors	PTFS	
		Mean	SD
Preparation of Lesson (Instruction)	vi. Code switching (Speaking skills)	3.55	.51
	i. Lesson Plan (instructions)	3.23	.60
	ii. Clarity & specification of aim (Instructions)	3.12	.60
	iii. Timing (Instructions)	3.19	.41
Execution of Lesson plan (Instruction)	iv. Suitability of materials and methods (Pedagogy: instructional techniques)	3.32	.48
	i. Presentation of material: Meaningful, Contextualized	3.42	.54
	ii. Handling of text/dialogue etc. (Reading skills)	3.74	.45
	iii. Handling of Structure	3.60	.50
	iv. Handling of lexis	3.05	.22
	v. Questioning	2.91	.55
	vi. Controlled practices: Choral individual (Instruction)	3.31	.48
	vii. Progress through the lesson, changes in activity, pace (Instruction)	3.10	.31
	viii. Awareness and correction of errors (Instruction)	3.30	.47
	ix. Checking of learning (Formative assessment)	3.75	.55
Classroom management	x. Achievement of objectives (Formative assessment)	3.34	.49
	i. Clarity of instructions	3.25	.44
	ii. Use of black/white board (Writing skills)	3.25	.68
	iii. Use of other instructional aids	2.66	.92
	iv. A variety of interaction patterns	3.22	.37
	v. Maintenance of interest	3.15	.44
Motivation	vi. Involvement and encouragement of Students	3.26	.65
	i. Facial expressions	3.58	.61
	ii. Enthusiasm	3.20	.41
Engagement	iii. Aspirational talks	2.53	.74
	(i). Students busy in class work	3.38	.44
Ethical Values	(i). Teacher's talk/story related to religious, ethical, & social issues.	2.00	.71

Overall mean= 3.16, Criterion Mean= 3.0

Table 4 indicates the preparedness level of PTFS of MA ELTL program observed during their PT at different schools of Lahore. The overall observed level of preparedness of PTFS was 'adequate' (M=3.16) in all sub-domains except 'Ethical Values' (M=2.00) where it was 'border-line'. The overall mean score (3.16) and the mean score of each sub-domain were greater than criterion mean 3.00.

Item wise analysis of 'classroom resources' (M=3.18) reveals that PTFS had 'adequate' ability to utilize classroom resources. The highest rated evidence was 'Arrangement and use of classroom resources' (M=3.37) and the lowest was 'Audio/ Noise level (M=2.80), which shows that the noise level of external sounds was at 'borderline'. Item wise analysis of 'instructor's personal qualities' (M=3.53) show that PTFS had 'adequate' personal qualities as professional teacher. The highest rated evidence was 'Presence' (M=3.80) which indicate that PTFS were punctual. The lowest rated item was 'Rapport' (M=3.13). Item wise analysis of 'Appropriateness of English language skills' (M=3.53) show that PTFS were adequately prepared to teach English language. The highest rated item was 'Fluency' (M=3.75) which indicates 'adequate' fluency of PTFS in speaking English. Item wise analysis of 'preparation of lesson plan' (M=3.22) indicates 'adequate' lesson planning ability of PTFS. The item wise analysis of 'execution of lesson plan' (M=3.35) reveals that PTFS were adequately prepared in all items but they were facing difficulty in asking complex questions as the two lowest rated item was 'Questioning' (M=2.91). The item wise analysis of sixth sub-domain 'classroom management' (M=3.13) depicts that PTFS were adequately prepared in all items but they were at 'borderline' in 'use of other instructional aids (M=2.66). Item wise analysis of 'motivation' (M= 3.10) reveals that PTFS were adequately prepared to motivate their students but they were at 'borderline' to inspire their students by 'aspirational talks' (M= 2.53). The item wise analysis of 'engagement' (M= 3.38) shows that the PTFS were adequately prepared to engage their students. The above findings are in line with results of questionnaire

which also indicate that PTFS were ‘moderately prepared’ with overall mean scores more than 3.00 in all areas (Table 3).

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the light of above findings, this study concludes that the MA ELTL program moderately prepared its graduates in four areas; instruction, curriculum, professionalism, and English language skills. Moreover, the graduates of MA ELTL program felt relatively more prepared in the core areas of instruction, and English language skills as compared to curriculum and professionalism. It showed positive attitude of Pakistani teachers towards learning and teaching English language skills, which is in line with previous research (Anwar, 2016). The study also revealed that PTFS and alumni were facing some difficulty in teaching at developmentally appropriate levels ($M=3.39$) and bridging the gap between theory and practice through field based experiences ($M=3.34$) (Table 3). The PTFS were found relatively weak in sub-domains of Questioning ($M=2.91$) and use of instructional aids ($M=2.66$) other than black/white board (Table 4).

In purview of the above conclusions following recommendations were drawn to put forward for policy makers and academicians of teacher education institutions:

- The duration and quality of practice teaching should be improved. Prospective teachers must be trained to apply theoretical knowledge into practical teaching under the guidance of instructors.
- Academicians of IER should design a new course relating to child growth and development with special focus on making prospective teachers able to teach according to developmental levels of the children.
- Prospective teachers must be trained in development and use of instructional aids other than black/white board. They must be trained to utilize maximum available resources.
- The IER administration must think on ways of encouraging prospective teachers for use of different instructional aids for making their teaching more interesting and effective. Technical and logistic help may be sought from different departments such as Directorate of Staff Development.

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