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Exploring the perceptions of EFL student teachers on their learning experience during the teaching practicum: a comparative study
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ABSTRACT

Teaching practicum (TP) is the key component of a teacher training programme (Wilson, 2006), and an understanding of how student teachers (ST) perceive this process would inform the development of teacher preparation programmes (Beeth and Adada, (2006). This study investigates English-as-a-foreign language (EFL) STs' perceptions of their learning about language teaching and the challenges they experienced during the practicum. It compares the perceptions of EFL STs in two different TP models operated by two large universities in Vietnam to identify the similarities and differences between the two groups. Given that comparative studies are needed to develop concept and generalisation (Przeworski and Teune, 1970), this paper makes valuable contribution to the literature by providing a holistic understanding of how different implementations of TP could shape STs' perceptions of their experience during the TP. A mixed methods approach was adopted, employing a questionnaire and focus groups as data collection instruments. The findings reveal few differences in terms of knowledge of language teaching whilst significant differences were found in terms of the challenges experienced by the participants of the two practicum models. In general, STs of both TP models are confident about pedagogical skills such as lesson planning, classroom management, time management and language assessment. Additionally, they both experience common challenges of the practicum when it comes to the mentor teachers, students, practicum sites and themselves as STs. However, ST of the alternative model face more unique challenges to do with their training institution and the content of this TP model.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

Figures

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL: English as a foreign language

ELTE: English language teacher education

FG: Focus group

MOET: Ministry of Education and Training

MT: Mentor teachers

ST: Student teachers

TP: Teaching practicum

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale for the study and the research questions

In any teacher education (TE) programme, including English language teacher education (ELTE), the teaching practicum (TP) is generally regarded as the key component of the entire process (Wilson, 2006). Farrell (2008) stresses the value of TP as profoundly influential to the professional development of student teachers (STs) in the sense that it provides them with opportunities to experience real classroom settings. TP also allows STs to bridge the gap between theories and practice (Leshem and Bar-Hama, 2007) and develop various teaching competencies (Beck and Kosnik, 2002). However, in accomplishing these goals, STs encounter various challenges that can significantly influence their perceptions of their learning during TP (Gan, 2013; Merc, 2010). In the ELTE context, previous studies have addressed in detail the challenges faced by English as a foreign language (EFL) STs, which are found to stem from actors of the TP such as the STs themselves (Gan, 2013); Mentor teachers (Moore, 2003); the host schools (Yan and He, 2010) and the host school students (Phairee et al., 2008).

Different educational faculties across universities around the world operate different TP models, implemented in various ways. Although the abovementioned work provides valuable insights into the learning experience of EFL STs in different national contexts, more research is needed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue in a wider variety of contexts. In Vietnam, there is a paucity of research focusing on EFL STs' learning during TP (Tran and Nguyen, 2017; Canh, 2014) and the challenges faced by these STs (Canh, 2014; Le, 2007). These studies are similar in that they investigate the traditional TP model in Vietnam, which is characterised as STs going into secondary or high schools to practice teaching under the guidance of schoolteachers (Canh, 2014). The TP often takes place in the last semester of the training programmes (MOET, 2003). Recently, there has been an alternative ELT TP model newly introduced at a large university in Vietnam, which requires STs to work more independently by finding the practicum sites themselves. Little research has been conducted thus far to explore STs' experience in this new context. Moreover, comparative studies which explore the experience of STs' from different contexts are needed to better understand how different TP model might shape STs' perceptions of their TP experience. Therefore, this research aimed to compare the perception of STs' about their learning experiences, both in terms of learning about teaching and the challenges that they encounter in two different TP models. This study was conducted to seek answers to address the following research questions:

1. What do EFL student teachers think they have learnt about language teaching in their teaching practicum?

2. What are the challenges EFL student teachers think they have experienced in their teaching practicum?

3. What are the differences (if any) in the perceptions of EFL student teachers participating in two different practicum models in terms of learning about teaching and challenges experienced?

1.2. Significance of the study

This study benefits teacher trainers, educational policy makers and EFL STs. Its findings may be useful to policy makers and teacher trainers and inform future changes to the implementation of TP to enhance the learning experience of STs. Additionally, from a theoretical perspective, the study presented here is one of the first investigations to compare the TP learning experience perceived by EFL STs participating in two different TP models. Its findings thus make a valuable contribution to the existing literature. The study also sheds light on EFL STs' perceptions of the issue and identifies differences between the perceptions of these two groups.

1.3. Organization

The dissertation is organized into five main parts.

Chapter I (Introduction) gives a rationale for this research, states the research questions, and presents its contribution to existing literature.

Chapter II (Literature review) defines key concepts and provides a brief literature review of EFL TP studies.

Chapter III (Methodology) explicates the methods this study followed to generate its findings.

Chapter IV (Findings and discussion) presents the results of the study and discusses them in relation to existing literature.

Chapter V (Conclusion) provides conclusion, implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Chapter introduction

This chapter begins with background information on TP with a focus on its main stakeholders and their roles. It then gives an overview of different TP models in ELTE focusing on implementations, advantages, and limitations. The context of ELTE TP in Vietnam is then described before defining the focus of this study. Previous research around the world and in Vietnam are reviewed concerning the values of ELTE TP and its challenges as perceived by EFL student teachers (STs), who are the focus of this research. The chapter ends by identifying the gap in the literature.

2.2. Conceptual framework

2.2.1. Teaching practicum

The term "practicum" carries a universal meaning, recognized in multiple studies as a chance for practical teaching experience (Mattsson et al., 2011; Schulz, 2005; Winsor et al, 1999). In any teacher education training programme, the practicum is regarded as the key component of the entire process (Wilson, 2006) and is often highly valued by STs and teacher educators (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). Quazi et al. (2012) point out three main stakeholders that are usually involved in the teaching practicum.

Firstly, student teachers (STs) are the people for whom practicum is constructed and who gain teaching experience in a real school context (Lawson et al., 2015). These STs are expected to have acquired several basic teaching competencies before participating in the practicum (Quazi et al, 2012). In TP, a number of problems might arise that STs need to overcome (e.g., dealing with student behaviour, co-working with other teachers). However, in the TP process, STs are supported by mentor teachers and university based-teacher educators to learn and develop professionally (Lawson et al, 2015 and Poulou, 2007). Secondly, mentor teachers (MTs) are experienced schoolteachers who have mastered pedagogical knowledge and are appointed to support STs during their practicum (Shaw, 1992). Although there are various definitions for mentoring in the literature, it commonly consists of supervision, coaching, guidance, and counselling to help STs navigate the transition between university and school (Ambrosetti and Dekkers, 2010; Stanulis and Ames, 2009). Thirdly, university supervisors are from the educational institute and should have an in-depth understanding of the practicum programme, the expectations of the host schools, MTs and STs. They also understand the expectations that the educational institution has set for their teacher trainees as well as general students' concerns and thus can provide STs with sufficient guidance (McBurney-Fry, 2002). These stakeholders are different from MTs in that whilst MTs provide support to STs in terms of pedagogical knowledge, university supervisors play a role in facilitating communication between STs and the host schools.

Another stakeholder as pointed out by Lawson (2015) is university teacher educator, who are not directly involved in the TP time yet play a crucial role in preparing STs to teach by developing their knowledge of teaching (Trumbull and Fluet, 2008). In a dichotomous model of TE, "the university provides the theory, skills, and knowledge about teaching through coursework; the school provides the field setting where such knowledge is applied and practiced" (Wideen et al., 1998, p.133). In combination, how these stakeholders are expected to work together to manage the TP can be illustrated as in Figure 1 below.
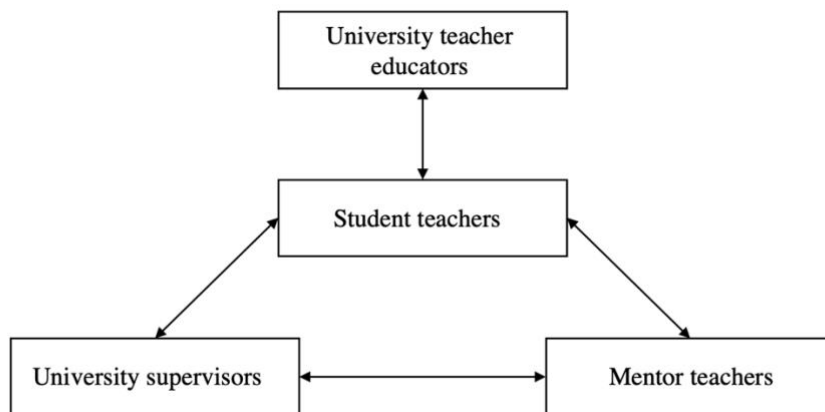
Figure 1.1. The relationships of main stakeholders in the teaching practicum

For the TP to be successful, there is a need for a shared understanding of the goal and specific roles of all the participants, which are defined comprehensively in guidelines and are reviewed by all parties (Cirocki et al., 2019). Only by doing so can communities of practice transform STs' engagement to full participation.

2.2.2. English language teaching practicum

The traditional model

The traditional conceptualisation of the ELTE practicum is not much different from that of any teacher educator programme, which is framed as STs being sent to host schools to put university-acquired theories into practice (Lawson et al., 2015). The prospective teachers also work under the guidance of MTs from the host schools, who show the novice how to do the teaching job in reality (Shaw, 1992) Previous research on ELT practicum in non-native English-speaking contexts (e.g., Borg, 2004; Freeman, 2001, 2002; Gebhard, 2009; Gower et al., 2005;) usually features some common TP characteristics which are in line with those highlighted by Stoynoff (1999) for the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) practicum. Accordingly, there are five main features of a TESOL practicum. First, the TP is integrated into the training programme. Second, the TP requires a team approach, which includes MTs, STs and university supervisors. Third, the TP provides intensive

modelling and coaching for STs. Fourth, STs explore their apprenticeship through systematic observations of teaching practice at the host schools. Finally, the TP outcome is usually assessed by means of a portfolio which often includes lesson plans, observation notes or lesson videos.

This rather traditional (i.e., typical) TP model is often placed at the end of the ELTE programme and is referred to as the *apprenticeship model* (Zeichner, 1996). What remains salient in the design of the traditional ELTE practicum is the presence of MTs, who take the responsibility of modelling, coaching, and giving feedback to help STs better prepare for the specific classroom context that they are put in. The main argument for this model is that STs receive comprehensive professional feedback from MTs to improve their teaching practice (Schulz, 2005; Baek & Ham, 2009). Such a design assists participants to reflect on their entire process from preparation to execution; hence, it contributes to skill development in their chosen career (Tindowen et al., 2019). One major problem with this model is its complete reliance on the mentoring of MTs in the host schools (Zeichner, 1996). As MTs become the main source of expertise, what STs learn from them during the practicum might conflict with what they have been taught at the training university. This is exacerbated when there is a lack of mutual communication between MTs and STs (Zeichner, 1996) In other words, when their voices are not balanced, STs become the passive recipients of teaching knowledge provided by MTs and this is seen as an enduring issue of TP following this model (Le, 2007; Moore, 2003).

Alternative models

In realising the shortcomings of the *apprenticeship model,* Zeichner (1996) suggests two alternative models, in which the sources of learning are more diverse. The *applied science/laboratory model* requires STs to apply their learnt knowledge and theories from academic courses to a real classroom setting. The source of teaching expertise thus lies in educational research rather than the MTs. Unlike the *apprenticeship model* where the practices of MTs are considered role models for STs, in the *applied science model,* STs test their own acquired teaching theories. The downside of this model is that scientific theory alone has never been enough to deal with the dynamic issues that practitioners of any profession face in reality (Schon, 1983). A similar argument thus could be made for this *applied science model* in TP. Zeichner (1996) also noted that a technical application of this model might lead to STs "missing out on the vast expertise that resides in the practices of teachers and on the potential to generate theory through teaching practice" (p.221). Moreover, this approach requires the practicum to run concurrently with academic course work, which is not reported in most TESOL practicum in the literature (Cirocki et al., 2019).

The *inquiry-oriented model* views STs as reflective practitioners and teaching as a form of research. Different from the applied science model where STs simply put university-gained knowledge into practice, an *inquiry-oriented model* requires STs to make their own judgements and evaluations of their teaching and see which methods work under which circumstances. This approach thus emphasises STs' continuous reflections on their TP to reinforce and develop new knowledge about teaching. Therefore, STs are independent and responsible for their own learning and professional development in the TP. Even though ELT researchers acknowledge the importance of reflective practice and agree that it should be integrated in TP (e.g., Zeichner, 1996; Farrell, 2016a, 2016b), the practice is not without its critics. For instance, STs might view reflective practice time-consuming and somewhat forceful if it is included for assessment purposes, given that they already have to deal with a tight teaching schedule and workload in the TP (Hobbs, 2007; Finlay, 2008). Therefore, STs may reflect on their TP in a strategic manner, which is obviously not the desirable outcome of this model.

In summary, it has been shown from this review section that all TP models have their rationales, benefits, and limitations. Each model can help to overcome some of the pitfalls of the practicum but not all of them. Therefore, the implementation of any TP model requires deliberate consideration to be successful.

2.2.3. English language teaching practicum in Vietnamese context

The traditional (i.e., typical) TP model in ELTE in Vietnam is characterised as STs going to secondary or high schools to practice teaching in the context of a school, which often takes place in the last semester of the training programme (MOET, 2003). At the host schools, STs work under the guidance of MTs, observe MTs' lessons, develop lesson plans, and conduct their own teaching which is assessed by MTs (Canh, 2014). This is in line with what has been described as a typical TESOL TP in the literature (see 2.1.2). Vietnamese EFL STs are largely dependent on their MTs for guidance in teaching (Pham, 2001). Thus, it could be inferred that the traditional ELTE TP model in Vietnam follows Zeichner's (1996) *apprenticeship model*.

Another TP model recently launched by a major university in Vietnam is called the Learning by Doing (LBD) project. Accordingly, STs independently conduct their TP based on pre-set criteria, provided as guidelines from the university, and create a personal portfolio which includes their reflections of what they have learnt and discovered throughout the TP (University B, 2018). In teacher education, portfolios are standardized portraits of professional expertise and personal creativity which demonstrates STs' performance and how they elicit the process in their own way (Winsor & Ellefson,

1995). A practicum portfolio thus refers to a collection of papers that aims to demonstrate STs' personal development regarding their teaching profession and their independence when confronting actual workplace situations. Based on what has been discussed in the literature and the analysis of the LBD project (University B, 2018), it is reasonable to state that this alternative model shares similarities with *the inquiry-based TP mode*l and is evidence-based, with the inclusion of STs' reflective portfolios.

This study focuses on the STs' experience in the ELTE TP models at two large universities in Vietnam: University A and B. University A adopts the *apprenticeship model,* which has been proven to be traditional whilst University B adopts the *inquiry-based TP model.* For the rest of this dissertation, the TP model at University A will be referred to as the traditional model whilst the one at University B will be referred to as the alternative model.

2.3. Empirical research
2.3.1. Values of the teaching practicum

The TP experience is viewed as one of the most valuable aspects of ELTE programmes (Crookes, 2003; Farrell, 2001) when STs have a chance to put their theoretical teaching knowledge to practical use (Bezzina & Michalack, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Tin, 2006). Bridging theory and practice has always been the central purpose of any ELTE TP (Cirocki et al., 2019). Moreover, Vygotsky (1978) contents that for learning to take place, it must be socially mediated by interaction, language, and authentic contexts. This is true for EFL STs in Köksal and Genç's (2019) study who see the successful application and consolidation of learnt pedagogical strategies as due to the opportunity to observe classrooms, interact with learners and MTs in the school context.

Farrell (2008) stresses the value of TP as profoundly influential to EFL STs' professional development, a view supported by Köksal and Genç (2019). TP is regarded as a specific block of time in which STs are provided with opportunities to try out their teaching skills, take on professional roles, learn from experienced teachers, negotiate their growing pedagogical knowledge, and apprentice into the profession (Farrell, 2008). Clearly, the direct involvement of STs in concrete teaching situations allows them to formulate their own interpretation of how pedagogical knowledge content should be applied in real classroom contexts and thus enriches their understanding on the nature of being a teacher.

Previous studies concerning the experience of EFL STs in the TP also show that the TP enables STs to develop various teaching competencies (Allsopp et al., 2006). Sathappan and Gurusamy (2019) utilise a combination of interviews, questionnaire, and journal writings to obtain information on EFL STs'

perspectives of the roles of TP in promoting their pedagogical skills and subject matter knowledge. Findings from this study suggest that STs improved their lesson plan preparation, the ability to produce subject relevant teaching aids, classroom management skills and students' learning motivation. These findings are in line with a study by Pinder (2008) in which STs stated that they had learnt about behaviour management, lesson planning, curriculum delivery, effective communication, professional relationships, and children, as well as developed their teachers' selves.

In the context of Vietnam, results from a qualitative study conducted by Tran and Nguyen (2017) with 15 EFL STs concerning their TP experience concur with findings of studies discussed previously (e.g., Köksal and Genç, 2019; Pinder, 2008). Accordingly, EFL STs consider the practicum as a valuable time for experimenting with real teaching, helping them learn more about lesson planning, try out learnt pedagogical techniques, practice assessment and finish a lesson in the allocated time (time management). STs in this study also viewed the practicum as a meaningful time to develop professional skills such as self-discipline, teamwork and problem solving. In another study (Canh, 2014), Vietnamese EFL STs perceived the TP as a learning experience for their future career in which they learned how to plan a lesson, present vocabulary, and sequence classroom activities.

In summary, STs of ELT generally value the TP in that it provides them with a chance to practice university-acquired theory in a real learning context. They also view this specific block of time as an opportunity to develop their understanding of the teaching profession whilst improving various specific teaching competences such as lesson planning, language assessment, time management and classroom management. The TP is also believed to help STs develop their knowledge about learners.

2.3.2. Challenges of the teaching practicum as perceived by student teachers

Researchers have addressed challenges which EFL STs encounter during the TP in different contexts. This section focuses on discussing the most common challenges as perceived by EFL STs, which are categorised into four sources: host school-related challenges; mentor teacher-related challenges; student-related challenges; and student teacher-related challenges.

Host school-related challenges

A significant problem for EFL STs that emerges from studies is the lack of support for STs from the host schools (Aldabbus, 2020; Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005; Boz and Boz, 2006). According to Smith and Lev-Ari (2005), most STs do not perceive the host school as supportive during their TP. The researchers account for this by suggesting that supporting STs is viewed as the responsibility of MTs only.

Furthermore, the lack of teaching expertise and temporary status of STs at the host schools are seen as possibly detrimental to the students' learning (Yan and He, 2010). Aldabbus (2020) concurs, stating that the host schools often doubt the STs' abilities and are opposed to changing teachers within a course since it may negatively impact their pupils.

Another challenge related to the host schools is the lack of teaching materials and facilities. This issue seems to be international: schools in various contexts do not provide sufficient facilities and allowances for effective teaching practice (Merc, 2010; Adeyanju, 2012). Similarly, Aldabbus (2020) reports that even if the host schools do have relevant materials and equipment, they are usually locked away and not made easily available to the STs.

Mentor teacher-related challenges

Inadequate support from MTs for STs is found to be one of the most significant problems as perceived by STs in various contexts (e.g., Merc, 2010; Beck and Kosnik, 2012). In Merc's (2010) study, reflection reports of ELT STs reveal that MTs were often absent whilst STs were teaching, thus no feedback for STs was provided. Similarly, a study by Ngoh and Tan (2000) found that teachers were reluctant to carry out the mentoring role. Farrell (2008) posits that this is due to the perception of both MTs and host schools that mentoring STs is a burden and an interruption of their teaching and time. Moreover, some MTs are found to impose elevated expectations on STs without providing corresponding support (Aldabbus, 2020), which inevitably causes stress for the STs.

Another MT-related problem as reported by EFL STs is the lack of effective feedback (Mutlu, 2015). Nakpodia (2011) found that STs did not have the chance to discuss their lessons with their MTs or seek advice for improvement. Similarly, a case study conducted by Yavuz (2011) with six EFL STs reveals that their mentors had failed to give guidance or provide adequate feedback.

The mismatch between what STs have learnt about how to teach English at university and how the MTs actually do it in the classroom is another MT-related problem as reported by EFL STs in Mutlu's (2015) study. Some STs in this study did not agree with the methods applied by their MTs yet were unable to discuss their concerns with the MTs. These are consistent with Moore (2003) who found that STs usually embraced the style and methodology of their MTs, regardless of whether they agreed with their approach. EFL STs are also discouraged from applying new teaching methods (Gan, 2013; Aldabbus, 2020). However, this is understandable given the constraints to finish the syllabus within the allocated time (Confait, 2015).

Student-related challenges

EFL STs are found to have problems with student discipline and learning motivation, which results in STs' concerns about classroom management and time management (Murray-Harvey et al., 2000; Merc, 2010; Gan, 2013). Students were found to behave differently with STs, not showing respect and engaging in challenging behaviours because they see STs as university students rather than teachers (Onyebukwa-Nwanoro, 2017). In the same vein, STs in Merc's (2010) study complained that students were indifferent in lessons taught by STs. In dealing with students' disruptive behaviours such as sleeping, talking, or playing games in class, STs often ended up spending more time controlling the class than teaching and were unable to finish what they had prepared in the allocated time (Gan, 2013).

Perhaps one of the most commonly expressed problem is the large class sizes with mixed-ability students (Phairee et al., 2008). Overloaded classrooms and individual differences cause difficulties for STs (Onyebukwa-Nwanoro, 2017). Accordingly, STs struggle to include necessary activities and apply teaching methods to suit individual differences. The inclusion of students of varying English levels in the same classroom was a challenge for STs who then struggled to conduct the lesson according to their plan (Köksal and Genç, 2019).

A final problem relates to students' English proficiency. Whilst Tuzel and Akcan (2009) find that EFL STs have difficulty in simplifying their language according to student level, STs in Mutlu's (2015) study were more concerned about the high language proficiency of learners and their learning pace. Accordingly, STs felt unconfident and doubtful about their own language teaching capacity when faced with questions they could not answer or when challenged for mispronouncing a word when speaking to students.

In the context of Vietnam

There are also studies done in Vietnam which is the context of the current study. Le (2007) analysed data from 23 post-classroom observation discussions between 15 EFL STs and 23 school-based MTs and identified a considerable imbalance in terms of talking time and ideas presented between STs and MTs. In other words, STs tended to be passive recipients of mentor teachers' own ideas about planning and delivering lessons, which also resulted in their limited talking time. Canh (2014) identifies two main sources of challenges experienced by 5 EFL STs, which are related to the host-school students and the MTs. An unfriendly attitude, low participation and limited English proficiency are listed by participants as the challenges they face with the students. Regarding the MTs, the finding is in line with

Le (2007) in that MTs give feedback chiefly according to their intuition and personal experience, and STs do not have the chance to speak even if they are unable to make sense of the feedback. STs also found it hard to seek sufficient support from MTs due to their heavy workload.

In summary, it seems that the major challenges reported by EFL STs in their TP are not specific to any context but apply to many contexts around the world. It is noticeable that a large part of identified problems are located within the stakeholders of the TP.

2.4. Research gap

Whilst the abovementioned work provides valuable insights on EFL STs' practicum experience in various contexts, there is a paucity of data on what Vietnamese EFL STs learn in Vietnam and what difficulties they encounter during TP. Moreover, most published studies employ a qualitative approach with a small sample size of around 5 – 40 participants. These limitations are addressed by the current study which adopts a mixed methods approach with 70 EFL STs to explore their perceptions of TP. In addition, the model proposed at University B is an innovative one compared to the traditional run by most TE institutions in Vietnam. Thus, it is worth investigating the actual learning experience of STs in such a context to better understand how this model works based on STs' perception. Furthermore, there are no previous studies comparing the learning experience between STs participating in the traditional model and those participating in the alternative model. In order to fill this gap, the current study attempts to contribute to the existing literature by shedding light on the learning experience of EFL prospective teachers in their practicum in Vietnam. It also set out to identify any differences in the experience of STs within these two models.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

A mixed-method study was conducted to explore EFL STs' perception on their learning experience during their TP. It compares the perceptions of final-year EFL STs in two universities operating two different TP models. The quantitative method used in this study was a questionnaire, which helped to measure variables in EFL STs' perceptions of their learning experiences in TP. Focus groups (FGs) were conducted to collect qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem. This chapter presents the approach and methods adopted in this study. It provides a detailed description of the research design, participants, and sampling methods. Data collection instruments and procedures are presented with rationales before illustrating the analytic process. Researcher reflexivity and ethical considerations are also discussed at the end of the chapter.

3.2. Mixed methods as the research approach

Mixed method research is the collection and combination of qualitative and quantitative data to seek answers to research questions (Creswell, 2014). One of the most prominent rationales for mixing methods is the offsetting of strengths and weaknesses of each method (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Dörnyei, 2007). Whilst a quantitative method can produce generalised findings (a "strength"), those results might lack specific content (a "weakness"). On the contrary, a qualitative method can provide rich descriptive data (a "strength"), yet those detailed results are limited to a few specific contexts (a "weakness"). Therefore, combining the two types of methods can generate more rigorous conclusions. Another reason for mixing methods is data triangulation (Dörnyei, 2007). The corresponding evidence gained from different methods increases the validity of the research results. The final reason for mixing methods in this study is to enable multi-level analysis of different facets of the research problem (Dörnyei, 2007; Greene et al., 1989; Johnson et al., 2007). This research studies individual perception, which is a complex social phenomenon. Thus, comparing and contrasting quantitative and qualitative data can generate more holistic and comprehensive findings.

According to Walliman (2018), to conduct mixed methods effectively and efficiently researchers must strike a balance between qualitative and quantitative elements and decide on the strategy that will be employed in the methods used. The current study treats qualitative and quantitative data equally (i.e., compatible, and complementary). Moreover, a sequential transformative strategy was followed in employing the research methods, which means both quantitative and qualitative methods were used (one after the other) to answer each research question. The results of each method were then interpreted in a complementary fashion (Clark and Creswell, 2008). In this study, the data collection began with a

questionnaire which asked final-year EFL STs about their attainments in terms of language teaching and the challenges they faced in the TP. Then, FGs were conducted with a sample of STs from each university, exploring the same subjects. Only when the data from both methods had been collected were they analysed and combined to provide a rich picture of the research problem.

3.3. Research design

In this part, I describe the context of this research before outlining the sampling method and participant recruitment procedure. Finally, I justify the chosen data collection instruments.

3.3.1. Research context

This study took place at two universities operating two different TP models in Vietnam. Both are top national universities in teacher training education, providing high-quality professional training for pre-service and in-service teachers throughout Vietnam. Below are the synopses of the two universities' TP models.

University A: EFL STs from University A follow a traditional TP model. In the final year of their training programme, STs complete a 10-week TP at host schools that have a partnership with University A. They register to a team under the supervision of a university teacher and go to the assigned school where they work with schoolteachers (acting as their MTs) throughout their TP. Their TP outcome is assessed by the MT based on a portfolio of lesson plans and observation notes.

University B: EFL STs from University B follow an alternative TP model. Since the first year of their training programme, STs are encouraged to start the TP themselves. They look for language centres or local schools and start working as an English language teacher until the total teaching time reaches the minimum of 240 hours (equivalent to 1 month of a full-time job). Their TP outcome is assessed by the university teachers based on a portfolio of reflections and evidence of their teaching (e.g., images, videos, lesson plan, etc.).

3.3.2. Participants

Sampling methods

Convenience sampling was used for both quantitative and qualitative data collection in this study. In convenience sampling, members of the target population are selected if they meet practical criteria such as availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, and the willingness to participate (Dörnyei, 2007). These characteristics of convenience sampling made it the most appropriate for this study. First, my existing network at these universities made targeting suitable participants straightforward as I could easily recruit a large number of participants for the questionnaire. Moreover, as this study was

conducted at the end of the academic year, these participants had more availability to take part in the research. Finally, the recruitment for the follow-up focus group was voluntary based on STs' willingness to take part after completing the questionnaire. In this study, the sample for questionnaire and the sample for focus groups had a nested relationship which in a mixed method research is described as "the sample members selected for one phase of the study represent a subset of those participants chosen for the other facet of the investigation" (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2017, p.292). In the current study, the sample participants selected for FGs represent a subset of those from the two universities (i.e., those participating in two TP models) in the questionnaire.

Another important consideration concerning sampling of each research method is sample size. According to Dörnyei (2017), the suggested sample size for comparative research using a quantitative method such as a questionnaire is at least 15 participants in each group. In this research, 35 EFL STs from University A and 35 STs from University B completed the questionnaire. Regarding the FGs, group size varies from 4–12 and depends on factors such as the topic and the aim of the study, the time allotted for each question, and the duration of the overall discussion (Galloway, 2019). In this study, the questions in the FGs required time for clarification and interaction between participants; therefore, the optimum group size was established as between 4 – 5. Another issue is the number of FGs (Galloway, 2019). This study involved the comparison of one group to another (i.e., between EFL STs from University A and EFL STs from University B); thus, it necessitated homogeneous groups of EFL STs from the two universities. In addition, Galloway (2019) suggests that multiple focus groups can enhance data triangulation when used in combination with other methods. Therefore, two FGs were conducted with STs from each university to triangulate data. In the end, there were four focus groups of 4 - 5 STs each.

Participants' characteristics

Milroy and Gordon (2003) contend that the validity of the inferences that may be made from the findings of a small group depends on how accurately the sample represents the larger population. To ensure that the samples were similar to the target population, certain criteria were established and applied whilst I recruited participants for this research project. Participants were final-year EFL STs from the two universities. Three main reasons account for this decision. First, University B only arranges for their students to participate in a compulsory TP in the final year of their study, thus only final-year students were eligible for this study. Second, even though STs from University A can start their TP any time throughout the four-year training programme, final-year students are expected to have experienced and gained the most from the alternative model due to its spanning the entire

programme and providing more continuity, in contrast to the traditional model. Third, as this is a comparative study, a balance needed to be maintained between the two groups to reach a conclusion.

3.3.3. Data collection instruments

Two data collection instruments were used in this study: a questionnaire and focus groups. Multiple methods were employed to collect evidence to obtain the richest understanding of the research problem (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). Moreover, Cohen et al. (2017) suggest that interviews and FGs can be used to triangulate data gained from a questionnaire. Each instrument is described in the following paragraphs.

Questionnaire

Rationale

The questionnaire is a frequently used and helpful tool for gathering survey data, offering organized, typically numerical data that may be delivered without the researcher's presence (Cohen et al., 2017). Denscombe (2014) highly recommends the use of this method for it is "economical", "relatively easy to arrange" and "accessible" (p.199). Moreover, according to Seliger and Shohamy (1989), a questionnaire is often used for attitudes, perspectives, feelings, and ideas which are not easily observed. The questionnaire thus plays a vital role in investigating STs' perceptions. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was impossible for this research to be conducted face-to-face. Thus, an online questionnaire via Microsoft Form was designed and distributed to EFL STs in the two researched universities. An online questionnaire also enables generalisation as it is convenient, highly responsive, economical, and accessible to larger populations (Creswell, 2014). It offers little chance for in-depth probes, yet this limitation can be overcome with the integration of other research methods, such as FGs as in this study.

Constructing the questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study included three sections (Appendix 1.1). In the first section, participants were asked background questions concerning their age, nationality, university and major, year of graduation and their general teaching experience (e.g., teaching sites, students' ages group, etc.). The second part of the questionnaire included multi-item scales to measure participants' perceptions of their ability to perform different teaching competencies after the TP. Multi-item scales refer to a collection of items that are worded differently yet target the same content (Dörnyei, 2007). Therefore, they help maximise the stable component that the items share and to minimise unrelated influences that are specific to each item. (Dörnyei, 2007). Robinson (2018) recommends a minimum

of three items per scale. The current study included three to five items in each sub-scale of the questionnaire. In writing these items, the researcher referred to domain 2 of the Vietnam in-service English Teacher Competency Framework (ETCF) (MOET, 2012) (Appendix 3). This is an official MOET guideline for various actors including EFL STs. Therefore, it is a well-established framework and suitable to be employed in this research. Concerning the scope of this study, competencies 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 are the focus of the researcher. Table 3.1 gives an overview of ETCF competencies investigated in the Likert-scale questions.

DOMAIN 2	Knowledge of Teaching
Competency 2.1	Language teaching methodology
Competency 2.2 ✔	Lesson planning
Competency 2.3 ✔	Conducting a lesson
Competency 2.4 ✔	Assessment of language learning
Competency 2.5	Resources
Competency 2.6	Technology

Table 3.1: An overview ETCF competencies investigated in the Likert-scale questions

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (α) for the reliability of the questionnaire and each sub-scale are presented in Table 3.2. With $\alpha > 0.9$ for the overall scale, the questionnaire is highly correlated and reliable.

Scale	Target competency	Items	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
Sub-scale A	2.2. Lesson planning	1-5	0.885
Sub-scale B	2.3. Conducting a lesson	6-10	0.841
Sub-scale C	2.4. Assessment of language learning	11-13	0.786
Overall scale	Knowledge of language teaching	1-13	0.924

Table 3.2. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the sub-scales and overall scale of the questionnaire

For these items, students were asked to rate their level of agreement with different statements on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree). Closed questions help avoid subjectivity and the answered can be entered into a data analysis programme after being numerically coded. (Dörnyei, 2007). At the end of the questionnaire, one open-ended question was added so that participants could clarify factors causing difficulties in their learning in their own words. Cohen et al. (2017) attribute open-ended questions to small-scale research because they can reach the "authenticity,

richness, depth of responses". The open-ended question was put at the end of the questionnaire to prevent people from getting stuck and discouraged from completing the form (Dörnyei, 2003).

Dörnyei (2007) foregrounds piloting as a fundamental step when employing a questionnaire to enhance the "reliability" and "validity" of the research outcome (p.75). As a questionnaire was used in this study, it necessitated piloting. After designing the items for the questionnaire, I piloted it with five non-research participants who were English language teachers with less than one year of teaching experience. The piloting group had similar characteristics to the study participants in that they were Vietnamese, had graduated from the same universities, and were in their first year of a teaching career. The similarities between the piloting group and the actual sample are important (Milroy and Gordon, 2003), which is to confirm the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Based on the feedback, the questionnaire proved to be comprehensible both in terms of language and structure.

Focus groups

Rationales

FGs were employed to seek answers to the research questions in this study as it is a useful instrument for getting information about attitudes, values, perceptions, and opinions. (Gibbs, 2012). Moreover, as the FG can be considered a type of interview, it also inherits the benefits of interviews, such as generating information that clarifies participants' experiences, including how they characterise them and what they think of them. (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). The participants' interaction within the group is prominent in the use of FGs (Morgan, 1988), resulting in a collective viewpoint as opposed to individual ones. It is thus more manageable for the researcher to analyse and synthesise the collected data. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, online focus groups were conducted via Microsoft Teams.

Constructing the questions

The questions for the FGs (see Appendix 2.1) were informed by the research questions and domain 2 of ETCF (MOET, 2012). To help refine the questions, I piloted a FG with the non-research participants who helped me review the questionnaire. After studying their answers, I realised that some of the questions were too general, which caused answers to be varied and far from the focus of the study. Therefore, I revised these questions and made them more specific. For example, the question *"What was your favourite part of the teaching practicum?"* was replaced by *"What did you learn about language teaching in your teaching practicum?*

3.3.4. Data collection procedure

The data collection process took place over approximately three weeks (from 15/05/2022 to 08/06/2022). To access as many potential participants as possible, I made use of both my existing networks in Vietnam and invited two lecturers at the researched universities to become the study gatekeepers. I posted the study information and the link to the questionnaire on the official final-year EFL STs' groups of the two universities on Facebook. I also sent invitation emails to the two lecturers, one of whom was my former professor, and the other was connected via my professor's network. The questionnaire was open for ten days (15/05/2022- 25/05/2022) and gained 70 legitimate responses. Four FGs with 17 STs were arranged shortly after the researcher contacted all eligible participants who gave their consent to take part in the follow-up study. All FGs were conducted online via Microsoft Teams and were audio-recorded. To protect their identities, from now on, I will address them by pseudonyms as specified in Table 3.3 below.

Groups	Pseudonyms	Graduation year	Practicum sites	Time and date	Duration
Group 1: University B	Sam	2022	English language centre	06/06/2022	1 hour and 25 minutes
	Alex	2022	English language centre		
	Taylor	2022	English language centre		
	Jessie	2022	Public high school		
Group 2: University A	Tracy	2022	Public secondary school	07/06/2022	1 hour and 42 minutes
	Jane	2022	International school		
	Marry	2022	Public secondary school		
	Anna	2022	Public high school		
Group 3: University A	Tim	2022	Public secondary school	08/06/2022	2 hours
	Kyle	2022	Public high school		
	Charlie	2022	Public high school		
	Lily	2022	International school		
	Jasmine	2022	Public secondary school		
Group 4: University B	Laura	2022	English language centre	08/06/2022	1 hour and 41 minutes
	Sarah	2022	English language centre		
	Quinn	2022	English language centre		
	Harley	2022	English language centre		

Table 3.3. Focus group details

3.4. Data analysis

3.4.1. Quantitative data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 28.0 was used to analyse the questionnaire data. SPSS is the most used software in applied linguistics and educational research, and its user-friendly interactive features are appropriate for novice researchers having little experience in statistics and programming (Dornyei, 2007). In running SPSS, I first defined the variables and gave a number to each response option before beginning the coding process. The coding frame for the Likert items in the five-point scale is "Strongly disagree" = 1, "Disagree" = 2, "Neither agree nor disagree" = 3, "Agree" = 4, "Strongly agree" = 5. Then, the item scores for each sub-scale were added up, resulting in a total score. The underlying assumption for this was that "no individual item carries an excessive load and

an inconsistent response to one item would cause limited damage" (Skehan, 1989, p.11). After that, descriptive statistics concerning the mean and the standard deviation were generated using SPSS. In the next stage, SPSS is used to identify significant differences between the two group participants' perceptions of their learning about language teaching in the TP. As a test of normality was run first which found that all the data were normally distributed, independent-samples t-test was then chosen for further analysis. Dörnyei (2007) suggests Independent-samples t-test for making comparisons between the perceptions of two groups that do not depend on each other. The results of the descriptive statistics and independent-samples t-test are presented in Chapter IV: Findings.

3.4.2. Qualitative data analysis

This section describes the process I followed to make sense of the qualitative data collected from the participants using thematic data analysis. Firstly, the FGs were transcribed verbatim for data analysis. After that, I adopted thematic analysis as it is widely used in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This type of data analysis explores both the semantic and latent meanings (ideas that lie behind what is explicitly stated) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, Braun et al. (2019) suggest thematic data analysis to researchers who aim to explore and understand shared meanings and experiences. To this end, thematic data analysis is an effective tool that helped to achieve this study's target which was to investigate participants' learning experiences in their TP.

This study adopted "a six-phrase approach to thematic analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.60) as it is clear, user-friendly and among the most influential approaches (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). In the first phase, the FG transcripts were read several times carefully. Whilst reading, I also made notes and highlighted pieces of information that might be potentially relevant to the research questions. Next, I listened to the recordings whilst scanning the transcripts to better understand the arguments made by participants. I then manually coded them based on semantic and latent meaning levels. The semantic meaning was what the participants actually meant with their language whilst latent meaning was concerned with the competencies in domain 2 in the ETCF (2012). I performed two levels of analysis: vertical and horizontal (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2009). Vertical analysis was conducted firstly on individual participants to achieve a set of themes. After that, horizontal analysis was carried out to compare and contrast data across participants from the same group as well as across the groups, to identify similarities and differences in their perceptions. In the following step, the preliminary themes were reviewed and modified to ensure that they already included all the relevant data and that themes did not overlap. In the last refinement of the themes, the essence of each theme was identified, and a link among themes was established so that they could all serve to address the research questions.

3.5. Ethical considerations

Denscombe (2014) asserts that "anyone participating in research should know what they are agreeing to do" (, p.315). Therefore, what always comes first before the questionnaire and the FCs is the participant information sheet (PIS) (see Appendix 1.2 and 2.2) which informs STs about the purpose of the study and participants' rights and responsibilities when joining the research. Before each FG, I briefly reminded STs about their rights, making it clear that participation was voluntary, and that participants were free to withdraw at any time without implications (Denscombe, 2014) The PIS also provides information that guarantees privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, which was particularly important for participants of this research. Since STs shared their past experiences in the TP, this might include criticisms towards individuals and organisations (Gray, 2014). To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were given to all participants of the FGs beforehand and identifiable personal details were kept confidential. I also asked for participants' permission to record the session before starting the discussion. The audio recordings were stored in a locked file before being deleted once the transcripts were finished. Pseudonyms were used in the final paper to maintain anonymity (Gray, 2014). This research is believed to be low risk in terms of ethical issues since the participants (STs) did not belong to any vulnerable, ethnic, or cultural groups, and the topic (ST's perception about the TP) was not a sensitive one (Gray, 2014), However, talking about past experiences can bring about uneasy memories (Bryman, 2016) and participants must be protected from any potential physical, emotional, or mental risks (Berg, 2008). Therefore, during the FGs, I stayed supportive by not making any judgmental statements.

Before progressing to the questionnaire, STs first read the PIS forms and gave their consent by clicking "I agree to participate". At the end of the questionnaire, if STs were happy to participate in the FGs, they would see a link to the consent form and signed their names to give their consent.

4.1. Chapter introduction

In this chapter, findings derived from the questionnaire and FGs are presented and discussed in relation to the literature synthesised in chapter II. It begins with findings about the learning experience of STs and what they thought they had learnt about language teaching in their TP. In this section, data from the questionnaire and FGs (focus groups) of STs from both universities are presented together under emerging themes. The next section provides data about challenges faced by STs during their TP. Findings from the FGs and the questionnaire are reported respectively in two sub-sections. A section comparing the experience of EFL STs participating in two different practicum models marks the end of this chapter.

4.2. Knowledge of language teaching

In this section, descriptive statistics concerning the percentages of total score, mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of each sub-scale are reported in tables. These data are then further discussed and supported with findings gained from FGs.

4.2.1. Lesson planning

The first five items in the Likert scale questions focus on STs' perceptions of their gained knowledge about lesson planning in TP. The perceptions of the STs from two universities can be inferred from the figures in Table 4.1 below.

Competency (Items)	Uni	N	Total score*					M	SD
			1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25		
2.2 (1-5)	A	35			2.9%	28.6%	68.5%	21.43	2.38
	B	35			5.7%	40.0%	54.3%	20.71	3.03
	A+B	70			4.3%	34.2%	61.5%	21.07	2.73

*1-5: Strongly disagree
6-10: Disagree
11-15: Neither agree nor disagree
16-20: Agree
21-25: Strongly agree

Table 4.1. Student teachers' perceptions of their gained knowledge of teaching about lesson planning (2.2) in their teaching practicum

In general, STs from both universities believed that they had learnt more about lesson planning in their TP. As shown in the table, 95.7% of participants scored more than 16 out of 25 in questions regarding lesson planning, which implies that they were confident in gaining this competency. The result for those from the alternative model (group B) who scored around 21-25 appeared to be relatively lower

than that of the traditional model (group A), with 54.3% of group B participants compared to 68.5% participants from group A.

This finding was further explained in the data gained from FGs, which showed that STs of the traditional model had more chance to practice lesson planning than those of the alternative model. The majority of STs from University A claimed that they had learnt intensively about lesson planning in reality. They agreed with one participant's opinion that planning a lesson did not need to be as detailed as how they had been taught at university but needed to be "*focused and specific*" (Tracy, FG2). The extract below illustrates what STs learnt about lesson planning in their practicum:

> *What I learnt from my MT was you must determine the focus of the lesson. Once you know the focus of your lesson, you can plan and prioritise activities that meet the objectives of the lesson.*

(Tracy, FG2)

Lesson planning, however, was not an emerging theme with participants of the alternative model. In most cases, these STs conducted their lessons at language centres, where they either were not required to turn in a lesson plan or were provided with ready-made ones. Commenting on lesson planning, one of the participants said:

> *I prepared but didn't really make a lesson plan. I selected different worksheets and thought about what games to let the students play.*

(Sam, FG1)

In short, EFL STs were generally confident with their achievement in learning about lesson planning during the TP. These results corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous literature (e.g., Köksal and Genç, 2019; Sathappan and Gurusamy, 2019; Tran and Nguyen, 2014) where lesson planning is regarded as one of the most prominent teaching competencies that STs develop through the TP. Data gained from FGs reveal that STs improved this competency as they were required to plan before each lesson, and they learnt from their MTs how to do it effectively. STs' answers suggest that the MTs played a key role in their learning. This reflects findings in Murray-Harvey et al. (2000) which show that the quality of the MTs is the key element for a successful practicum.

4.2.2. Conducting a lesson

The next five items in the Likert scale questions examined the STs' perceptions of their practice in conducting a lesson in the TP. Their perceptions can be deduced from the data in Table 4.2.

Competency (Items)	Uni	N	Total score					M	SD
			1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25		
2.3 (6-10)	A	35			2.9%	45.7%	51.4%	20.74	2.78
	B	35		5.7%	8.6%	45.7%	40.0%	19.54	3.72
	A+B	70		2.9%	5.7%	45.7%	45.7%	20.14	3.32

*1-5: Strongly disagree
6-10: Disagree
11-15: Neither agree nor disagree
16-20: Agree
21-25: Strongly agree

Table 4.2. Student teachers' perceptions of their gained knowledge of teaching about conducting a lesson (2.3) in their teaching practicum

Most questions in this sub-scale concerned pedagogical skills such as classroom management, time management, and flexibility when conducting in-class activities. As can be seen from Table 4.2, STs generally agreed that the TP had helped them to improve these skills to a significant degree, as shown in the high mean score (20.14) of both groups. Similar to the results reported in lesson planning, STs of the traditional model (group A) appeared to be more confident in these skills with a slightly higher mean score (20.74 compared to 19.54 of those partaking the alternative model (group B)). Moreover, STs from University B reported more varied results, with the scores distributed from 6 - 25. This characteristic was also recognised in the FGs with STs.

When asked a general question about what STs thought they had learnt in their TP, two most prominent themes emerged in all FGs were time management and classroom management. A common view amongst participants from University A was that teaching a lesson within 45 minutes was a real challenge, which they had to practice continuously throughout the TP to overcome. For example, one informant said:

> *There were lessons that I only finished one third of the plan before the bell rang as I included too many activities. Then time after time, I reduced the number of activities and planned on the focus. Now, I am quite confident that I could finish any lesson in the allocated time.*

> (Jasmine, FG3)

The experience of STs from University B was a bit different, however, as most of them chose to conduct their practicum at English language centres where the duration for each lesson was 90-120 minutes. Interestingly, two divergent discourses emerged. One individual said:

> *I taught kids aged from 6-8. In the first lesson, I had extra 30 minutes and students seemed bored with the worksheets I gave them. I then learnt to include more physical activities that*

took more time, and alternate stir-up activities with settle-down activities in class to manage the students as well.

<div align="right">(Sarah, FG4)</div>

Another participant from the same group commented:

I also had better timing in class after a while. However, my initial problem was different. I did not have enough time to finish everything in the slide provided by my centre. I taught TOEIC and thus the knowledge in each lesson was heavy.

<div align="right">(Laura, FG4)</div>

The theme of classroom management came up in discussions of time management. STs generally agreed that the most important task before conducting any activities was managing students. One ST put it:

I now understand why when I was a student, my teacher always spent time maiming orderliness and dealing with our behaviours before starting the lesson. For every activity, I had to think of how to keep everything organised to avoid wasting time.

<div align="right">(Anna, FG2)</div>

These results concur with the findings of other studies (Köksal and Genç, 2019; Sathappan and Gurusamy, 2019; Tran and Nguyen, 2017), in which classroom management and time management are emerging themes of EFL STs' learning in the TP. Concerning this study, it can be generally inferred from STs' answers in the FGs that practice makes perfect when it comes to classroom management and time management skills. STs' attainment in these pedagogical skills could also be explained by Vgotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning, which affirms that learning takes place through interactions with the surroundings by both action and language. Accordingly, STs' reports in the FGs indicated their learning happened through observing experienced teachers and interacting with both their MTs and the students.

4.2.3. Assessment of language learning

The third sub-scale in the questionnaire measured the extent to which STs believed they had learnt about assessment of language learning in their TP. Data collected from the questionnaire are illustrated in Table 4.3 below.

Competency (Items)	Uni	N	Total score					M	SD
			1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15		
2.4 (11-15)	A	35			28.6%	60.0%	11.4%	10.20	1.75
	B	35			37.1%	57.2%	5.7%	10.00	1.84
	A+B	70			32.9%	58.5%	8.6%	10.10	1.79

*1-3: Strongly disagree
4-6: Disagree
7-9: Neither agree nor disagree
10-12: Agree
11-15: Strongly agree

Table 4.3. Student teachers' perceptions of their gained knowledge of teaching about assessment of language learning (2.4) in their teaching practicum

As seen from the table, 67.1% of the participants scored more than 10 out of 15 for this sub-scale, indicating STs were convinced that they had achieved this competency to a high degree. STs from University A continued to score slightly higher than University B's, with a mean difference of 0.20. Perhaps what stands out in this table is the markedly higher percentage of STs from both universities who seem unsure about this competency attainment compared to the previous two (2.2 and 2.3). Accordingly, whilst less than 6% of all participants from both groups were uncertain about skills in lesson planning and conducting a lesson, around 30% appeared to be unconfident about their competence to assess student learning.

This result is consistent with what was discovered in the FGs with STs, which suggests that STs appeared to have less chance to practice assessment compared to other competencies i.e., lesson planning and conducting a lesson. Data gained from FGs with STs from University A revealed that in most cases, STs were asked to monitor examinations and help with marking students' papers, which happened rarely during their TP. Even though STs could design some tests and asked students to do it, these tests were not formal ones. One informant reported:

> *I also designed some vocabulary tests, which included multiple choice questions because it was easy to mark. However, the results of these tests did not affect students' academic reports, so they did not take it very seriously.*

(Tim, FG3)

STs from University B, on the other hand, who mostly conducted their TP in language centres, reported taking on more responsibilities for assessing students. Accordingly, they selected the test, monitored the examinations, marked the papers, and informed students' parents of the results. However, there was agreement among these STs that *"everything was quite ready-made"* (Quinn, FG4). She further explained:

I was told exactly which test to take from which book. My students were mostly kids of 5-6 years old, so it was quite effortless.

<div align="right">(Quinn, FG4)</div>

In line with Tran and Nguyen (2017), this study also found that EFL STs learnt more about language assessment in their TP. However, what was reported by STs about their attainment here needs cautious interpretation. Firstly, STs scored a significantly lower self-reported score for this competency compared to the others, which implies that they were not as confident when it came to language assessment. A sense of uncertainty was also noticeable in STs' answers in the FGs. Moreover, it was evident from the FGs that STs of this study did not have much chance to work on language assessment. What they mostly did in their TP was monitoring and marking exams, which did not require specialised skills. A possible explanation for this situation might be the brief time of the TP (10 weeks for STs of the traditional model in University A), making it less likely that STs had time to work on this competency. Within such a short time, it seems more reasonable for STs to concentrate on what they have on a regular basis such as lesson planning and conducting a lesson. Another possible explanation for this finding might be what has been identified in the literature, that the host schools usually consider the lack of teaching expertise of STs as detrimental to their students' learning (Aldabbus, 2020; Yan and He, 2010). Therefore, STs might not be trusted to design any formal test to assess their students.

4.2.4. Technology

Even though this study did not explicitly look at how STs' view their ability to exploit technology in teaching, it emerged from the FCs that participants from both universities to took great advantage of technology in their TP. They seemed to concur on a number of presentation tools such as PowerPoint, Google presentations and interactive platforms, for example, Quizizz, Kahoot and Quizlet. A ST commented on this consensus:

I think it is partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic when we had to learn online, our teachers also employed these tools.

<div align="right">(Charlie, FG3)</div>

An unexpected finding of this study provides insights into STs' use of technology in their TP. Accordingly, they appeared to be more open to apply technology to facilitate their teaching as it was a characteristic of online learning that they had previously experienced due to COVID-19. It is possible to infer that the pandemic has resulted in a unique situation that has boosted the use of technology in

classrooms. STs were thus unanimous in the FGs about the advantages of employing technology in the classroom as well as how they could do it.

4.3. Challenges faced by student teachers during their teaching practicum

4.3.1. Data from focus groups

After analysing data from FGs with STs from both universities on the challenges they experienced, emerging codes were generated and gathered under five themes. Despite some shared themes between the two groups, specific codes under these themes are unique to STs of each university. These themes and codes are presented in Table 4.6 below.

Themes	Codes from university A STs' statements	Codes from university B STs' statements
Student-related challenges	- Large number of students in mixed ability classrooms - Students' attitude and misbehaviours - Students of high English level	- Mixed ability classrooms - Students' attitude and misbehaviours
Mentor teacher-related challenges	- MTs' inadequate or lack of support - MTs imposing ideas about teaching methodologies	- Lack of support from MTs - Unqualified MTs
Practicum site-related challenges	- Lack of facilities and teaching resources - The school's location	- Unwelcoming attitudes - Unsecure work benefit and compensation at workplaces
The alternative model-related challenges		- Lack of detailed guidelines
The training university-related challenges		- Poor communication with STs about the

Table 4.4. Themes and codes generated from focus groups in relation to student teachers' perceptions of the challenges experienced during the practicum

Student-related challenges

Problems related to students seemed prominent and significantly affected STs experience during their TP. Some common issues related to students as shared by STs from both groups were student behaviours and mixed ability students placed in same class. The only challenge that was more unique to STs of University A was the large number of students and their relatively high English proficiency.

STs from both universities were unanimous in the view that there were always some students who kept messing around and disrupting the lessons. Some STs from University A seemed to feel hurt because the host school students did not show enough respect to them, and always behaved as if the STs were not there. The findings also suggest that misbehaviour exacerbated the challenges of classroom management and time management. As one participant put it:

> *If I put him in a group, he was always distracting other students and never spoke English. I wasted lots of time dealing with his attitude and behaviour.*

(Lily, FG3)

STs from University B seemed to experience less serious problems with student behaviour and reported no serious disruptive behaviours or disrespectful attitude. Instead, they were more likely to face students' lack of cooperation:

> *I taught little kids, so teaching was quite fun with many games and activities. However, there were some kids who were a little bit difficult to deal with. They either remained silent or just refused to do anything.*

(Sam, FG1)

Mixed ability classes were also a problem for STs regardless of their practicum sites. However, most STs showed more concern about those with low English proficiency as it was difficult to *"try out interesting learning activities"* (Jasmine, FG3). Other participants in FG3 expressed a similar view. One participant stated that he could not apply some more innovative teaching methods such as task-based learning, as it required a student-centred approach, which was challenging for low-level students because they always expected teacher-centredness (Kyle, FG3). Tim (FG3) then added that low proficiency learners also affected the pace of the lesson as STs had to spend more time on one activity. Thus, STs viewed students' low English proficiency as a reason why they ran out of in-class time and why they were unable to apply innovative teaching methods. Interestingly, in contrast with most participants, one ST in FG2 admitted that she found it more challenging to deal with high-ability students than low-level ones. She explained:

> *At international schools, the students' English was already at intermediate to upper intermediate level. Sometimes, I felt a bit incompetent because they could detect my mistakes in pronunciation or grammar when I spoke. When I gave them exercises to practice grammar, they finished quickly and started feeling bored.*

(Jane, FG2)

Jane later added that students also compared her with their regular teacher, saying things like "*Ms. H told us ...",* or "*why are we so slow on that, Ms. H would go quickly through that part*". She thus felt

stressed and worried before every lesson with the class. Students seemed to have a discriminatory attitude towards STs, which caused them to feel insecure in class.

Unlike STs from University B, the overwhelming majority of STs from University A emphasised that dealing with a large-size classroom (40 – 50 students) was among the toughest challenges they faced. Large class size and classroom management recurred together throughout the dataset, which suggests that STs confronted problems with classroom management because there were too many students to manage. Talking about this issue, a participant said:

> *Even though we had micro-teaching at university, the number of students who were our classmates were just around 20-25.*

<div align="right">(Anna, FG2)</div>

Another ST added:

> *I recruit students for my own English class, but I never accept more than 20. It is partly because my house does not have enough space, but mostly because I don't feel like I can manage more than that.*

<div align="right">(Marry, FG2)</div>

In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that students' misbehaviour and mixed-ability classrooms cause STs difficulties in classroom management and time management (Gan, 2013; Harvey et al., 2000; Köksal and Genç, 2019; Merc, 2010). Problems with time management and classroom management are partly explained in Gan's (2013) study as STs often end up spending more time dealing with disruptive behaviours such as sleeping, talking, or playing games in class rather than teaching and cannot finish what they had prepared for the allocated time. Moreover, in a mixed-ability classroom, the inclusion of different teaching methods to suit individual differences makes it difficult for STs to execute their plan smoothly (Gan, 2013; Köksal and Genç, 2019).

Another result of this study is that STs found it hard to apply innovative teaching methods due to the low English-level of the students. These findings are in line with recent studies by Gan (2013), Mutlu (2015) and Jay et al. (2021). Perhaps what emerges from the results reported here is that STs are concerned not only about the low proficiency students but also the highly proficient ones. STs can feel stressed when instructing highly proficient students, worrying that they (STs) will not be considered good enough. This result is consistent with Mutlu (2015) who also remarks that this phenomenon is common for STs who conducts their TP in competitive schools.

Mentor teacher-related challenges

University A

One of the key findings from the FGs with University A STs is their reluctance to conduct activities according to their ideas if these contradict their MT's preference. Two STs shared part of their experience with MTs:

> *I wanted to conduct an activity which would require students to move around. However, when I talked about it with my teacher mentor, she immediately disapproved and said that students would be disorganised and hard to manage.*
>
> <div align="right">(Tracy, FG2)</div>

> *There were lessons when I wanted to show some interesting videos to the students, which could be time-consuming according to my teacher mentor. So, most of the time, I couldn't do it if my teacher mentor were observing.*
>
> <div align="right">(Charlie, FG3)</div>

Several STs mentioned that they found some teaching methods of their MTs quite "outdated" and focused too much on rote memorisation. These methods were contradictory to what STs learnt at the training university. Jasmine recalled a time when she had a conflict with her MT:

> *When I taught about the "s" ending sound pronunciation of, I told students to forget all about the ending letter rules but learn about voiced and voiceless sound instead. When my mentor found out, she was not happy with me and asked me to stop applying advanced theory because students would not get it.*
>
> <div align="right">(Jasmine, FG3)</div>

Regarding the lack of support from MTs, one ST expressed his disappointment as his MT was not as supportive as he expected:

> *My mentor was usually absent from my lesson. He assigned me a class and a lesson to teach, and I hardly had time to discuss with him.*
>
> <div align="right">(Kyle, FG3)</div>

It is worth noting that when Kyle shared his negative experience with the MT, other STs in his FG also agreed with him, even though they had more supportive MTs. The reason given was that they all knew at least one friend who was in the same situation as Kyle. Tim called it "*bad luck*" and considered the support of MTs a *"decisive factor for a successful practicum"* (Tim, FG3).

Another form of inadequate support from MTs is MTs assigning challenging tasks without giving corresponding guidance. One of the participants revealed a time when she was so stressed, she burst into tears and had to talk to her MT:

When I was asked to teach a class called "project" when students had to create something, I was simply clueless because I had never done it before. My MT just told me that I did not need to do anything, just let my students do it. Do what?

<div align="right">(Jane, FG2)</div>

University B

When asked about her experience with the MTs at the host school, the only ST from University B who conducted her practicum at a public high school revealed that even though she was thankful to her MT, she wished that her MT had provided more specific guidance and feedback (Jessie, FG1). This ST also indicated that she had to work on her own most of the time throughout the practicum:

My mentor teacher was always busy. Even though she observed some of my lessons and gave comments on what I did well and what problems existed, we had little time to discuss how I could improve.

<div align="right">(Jessie, FG1)</div>

Most STs who chose language centres to conduct their TP described the colleagues who were responsible for guiding them at work as having an indifferent attitude. These people were asked by the centre directors to show the ST around and help them get to know about the centre and their role at work. When asked about these MTs' support, most participants agreed that they were not helpful at all. Four STs stated that their MTs were not qualified English language teachers; thus, they could not show them the appropriate way to teach English. Comments from STs related to their MTs are presented below:

A typical lesson was all about the teacher writing vocabulary on the board with Vietnamese translation and students copying in their notebooks. She did not encourage student participation at all. She didn't really know or care how detrimental this method can be to students. I felt that I knew more about teaching than her, which was the truth because they became teacher by experience, not by qualified teacher training like what I had.

<div align="right">(Harley, FG4)</div>

My mentor teacher still believed that we should give feedback by pointing out all mistakes that students made. I saw him stop a student speaking because of a small grammatical mistake with the article, regardless that the focus of the activity was on fluency.

<div align="right">(Alex, FG1)</div>

One ST was extremely disappointed with her time working at an English language centre because she received no support from other co-teachers. She reported struggling, becoming stressed to the point of being afraid to go to work. She then had to go to her university teacher to ask for help:

> *I was stressed and frustrated because the ones that should help did not provide any help at all. They knew more about the students and the teaching requirements there than my university teacher. Why didn't they help?*

<div align="right">(Sarah, FG4)</div>

With regards to MTs, inadequate support was in the form of absence from the observed lessons; giving broad and general comments; or assigning challenging tasks without specific guidance. This echoes the findings in other studies (see for example, Aldabbus, 2020; Mutlu, 2015; Nakpodia, 2011) linking inadequate support from MTs with STs' stress and dissatisfaction during their TP. Two possible explanations might account for this. Firstly, Farrell (2008) argues that this may derive from the perception of MTs who view mentoring STs as a burden and an interruption of their teaching and time. Secondly, as has been pointed out by Aldabbus (2020), MTs do not receive any training to do this job and are not given any systematic or standardized feedback techniques. Moreover, STs themselves are not always aware of what their MT's role consists of. Therefore, it is understandable that there is often a mismatch between what STs expect and what MTs provide.

Results from this study also suggest that STs might face the disapproval of their MT when applying teaching methods they have learnt at university. As a result, they end up practicing whatever their MT approves of. Similarly, Moore (2003) also found that STs usually embraced the style and methodology favoured by their MT, regardless of whether they agreed with the theory or practise recommended in the university classroom. Aldabbus (2020) also reported that STs felt discouraged from applying new teaching methods when their MT considered these activities a "waste of time" and "not carrying on with the syllabus". The reasons are varied, but it may have something to do with the time constraints that schoolteachers face in terms of finishing the syllabus within the time allocated by the Ministry of Education (Confait, 2015). In the context of Vietnam, each lesson of any subject as regulated by MOET lasts 45 minutes.

Finally, as in other studies, some STs stated that their MTs were not qualified. EFL STs in Mutlu's (2015) study reported a similar problem when noticing the way that their MT's teaching approach contradicted what they had learnt at university. However, unlike the MTs in Mutlu's (2015) study who are at least trained ELT teachers, the MTs University B STs were allocated had become teachers simply

by knowing the language and years of practice. This suggests that the teaching background of MTs might also affect how STs view their learning experience when working under their guidance in the TP. Murray-Harvey et al. (2000) also assert that the quality of the MTs is a key element in a successful practicum.

Practicum site-related challenges

University A

When asked about what they wished could have been different during the TP, a number of participants reluctantly mentioned the teaching materials and facilities in the host schools. The STs' attitude indicated that they did not consider this lack to be serious. However, the challenges that it posed on their practicum were undeniable, as one of the informants remarked:

> *I found tasks in the textbooks boring, so I spent lots of time searching for supplementary teaching materials on the internet and then printing them myself.*

> (Marry, FG2)

Other responses to this question included *"classrooms should be equipped with a projector"* (Anna, FG2), "*I wish the classrooms were bigger*" (Marry, FG2) and *"I wanted to change to another school as mine was located near a construction, which was noisy throughout the lessons"* (Tim, FG3).

Further analysis of the data reveals that the conditions of the host schools could contribute to STs' dissatisfaction with their lessons as they were not able to conduct activities that had been possible in another context (e.g., university classroom). One individual stated:

> *"a simple game like lucky number would be much more engaging and less time-consuming if it was computer-assisted, just like what we had at university when we microtaught."*

> (Anna, FG2).

Issues related to the host school are not particularly prominent in the FG data with participants from University A. However, a prominent challenge related to the practicum sites was the lack of teaching materials and facilities, which meant they were unable to implement some of the teaching activities as they would have wished. Similarly, studies in various contexts (Adeyanju, 2012; Aldabbus. 2020) found that schools did not provide sufficient facilities for effective teaching practice. The result of this research confirms that a similar problem exists in Vietnamese schools.

University B

Two types of practicum sites commonly chosen by EFL STs from University B were English language centres and public/private schools. The challenges STs experienced were partly dependent on the characteristics of these different institutions.

The only one who managed to go to a public school reported that she faced an unwelcoming attitude and confusion from the host school. She argued that as her training university had little contact with the host school, she felt a sense of reluctance from the schoolteachers when she came and asked to conduct her practicum there (Jessie, FG1). She recalled her first day arriving at the host school:

> *The headteacher asked me to wait outside whilst he had a word with other teachers. I overheard some teachers refused to be my MT as they were extremely busy preparing students for the national high school graduation examination.*

(Jessie, FG1)

A large number of STs, due to their inexperience, could only work at small and not reputable language centres. Issues experienced by the majority of STs who chose to work at these language centres were mostly related to their benefits and compensation at the workplace. For example, one participant voiced concern about her benefit as an employee at her workplace:

> *I was paid a very minimum wage for every teaching hour, and I was asked to do tons of work from planning to teaching to assessing. Sometimes, I felt as if I was exploited because I was still a university student.*

(Laura, FG4)

One ST even reported that he was deceived by an agency that promised to secure a teaching position at a language centre but then disappeared after taking his money (Taylor, FG1). It is worth mentioning that other participants had also almost been in the same situation and many other STs that they knew in person had ended up losing money.

Even though other studies (Aldabbus, 2020; Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005) reckon the host school as having an unwelcoming attitude toward students, a similar conclusion cannot be reached for this study as the relevant finding is unique in the dataset and needs cautious interpretation. The ST who mentioned this was the only one whose practicum took place in a public school which had no partnership with her training university. Her appearance at the practicum site was thus unexpected. Therefore, it could be argued that her negative experience was due to the lack of partnership between the two educational institutions, causing the host school was completely uninformed and unprepared for the STs.

Perhaps the most striking finding is from STs who reported encountering malpractice when searching for the practicum sites themselves. This experience has not been mentioned in published studies concerning either TESOL practicum or TP as a whole. This may be an issue with the implementation of the TP model, whereby STs conduct their practicum independently instead of following a team approach as highlighted by Stoyoff (1999).

The alternative model-related challenges

Particularly revealing are how participants of the alternative model from University B described the challenges related to the implementation of the alternative TP model. When asked about their difficulties with the alternative model, the participants were unanimous in their view that the requirement for teaching-related activities was too general with no specific criteria. The exact requirement for STs in the guidelines is *"practice teaching for 240 hours (equivalent to 30 full-time working days) at one of the following places: functional departments inside and outside the university, political organisations, social organisations, or enterprises that are legally guaranteed"* (University B, 2018). In all cases, there are two types of practicum sites for EFL STs to fulfil this requirement: schools/universities (either public or private) and English language centres. The participants on the whole remarked that this requirement confused them the most. One individual illustrated why she ended up choosing a practicum site which she later "*regretted*":

> *I found a job at this language centre simply to quickly complete that requirement as I didn't have much time left to complete the portfolio. I struggled a lot at this centre, which was small and unprofessional, and I regretted the time spent here. I wished our university hadn't let us go freely like that.*

(Harley, FG4)

Problems related to the alternative model were further expressed by a ST who chose to conduct her TP at a public high school. She was perplexed when being asked by the schoolteachers' questions such as *"What exactly does your university want you to do here?"* and *"Do you want to only teach or participate in other school activities as well?* (Jessie, FG1). She then offered an explanation for why she was unable to answer these questions:

> *It wasn't documented in the practicum guideline or orally guided to us by any staff in my university.*

(Jessie, FG1)

The training university-related challenges

The training university that operates the alternative model (University B) was reported to cause great confusion and difficulties for STs during their longitudinal practicum. A recurrent theme in the FGs was a sense amongst participants that poor communication between STs and the training university caused problems in the alternative TP model.

Six out of eight participants said that they did not understand clearly how their practicum portfolios were assessed, and what would be the focus of their practicum. STs were overly concerned about the unclear guidelines provided by the training university. Commenting on this issue, one of the interviewees said:

> As we were students at that time, we could not work full time and had to add up the total working time from different part-time teaching jobs in a long time to make it equivalent to 240 hours. It seemed a lot in our portfolio, but I doubt the legitimacy of each teaching job because we could even add 1-1 tutoring as teaching. So, what is the focus? Are we assessed based on the quantity or the quality of our work?
>
> (Sarah, FG4)

Additionally, it was reported that the training university only focused on disseminating information about the practicum to 3rd and 4th year students, whereas the alternative TP model encouraged STs to start early to be able to complete all requirements. STs thus felt they did not have enough time to complete all the requirements set by the training university because of the study workload they had at that time. The issue was voiced by all participants, and was described by Sam as below:

> I had a tough time trying to complete all the requirements whilst trying to handle all the deadlines at university. I felt like I should have known about the practicum content earlier when I didn't have that much workload at university.
>
> (Sam, FG1)

Concerning the inappropriate time that University B started to introduce the alternative TP model, Taylor then remarked

> It was a challenge to find a job as a teacher, not a teaching assistant, when you had little to no teaching experience. Even if there were English language centres that accepted 3rd or 4th year students, we normally failed in the demo teaching as part of the interview. As I felt like I didn't have much time, I ended up working at this language centre because it was the only one that let me teach.
>
> (Taylor, FG1)

37

What is unique about the results of this study is the challenges found related to the training university and the implementation of the alternative TP model itself. STs from University B of this study reported that the communication between the training university and the STs about the new TP was clearly ineffective, and the requirements of the alternative TP model itself was too general. This resulted in STs being unclear about their roles at the practicum sites, about how they were assessed and how they could find a trustworthy place for a high-quality TP. All these challenges were clearly the result of the training university's failure to provide comprehensive guidelines in which the goal and requirements are specific and clearly reviewed with all parties (Cirocki et al., 2019). Perhaps the guidelines are provided to STs, but not reviewed by other parties such as people at the practicum sites where STs are going to conduct their TP. Obviously, the partnership between the training university and the practicum sites is what needs to be addressed here.

4.3.2. Data from questionnaire

Data gained from an open-ended question in the questionnaire concerning the challenges experienced by STs in their TP was analysed using thematic analysis. The emerging codes were grouped under five themes (Table 4.5) and were quantitated for frequency analysis (Figure 4.1).

Themes	Examples codes from STs' responses
Student-related challenges	- Lack of confidence - Lack of experience - English proficiency
Student teacher-related challenges	- Students' personalities - Mixed-ability classes
Mentor teacher-related challenges	- Not having anyone to tell STs where to improve - Unsupportive mentors
Practicum site-related challenges	- Broken projectors - Lack of resources - Teaching-unrelated duties
Others	- Online teaching - Covid 19

Table 4.5. Themes and codes generated from questionnaire in relation to the student teachers' perception of the challenges experienced in teaching practicum
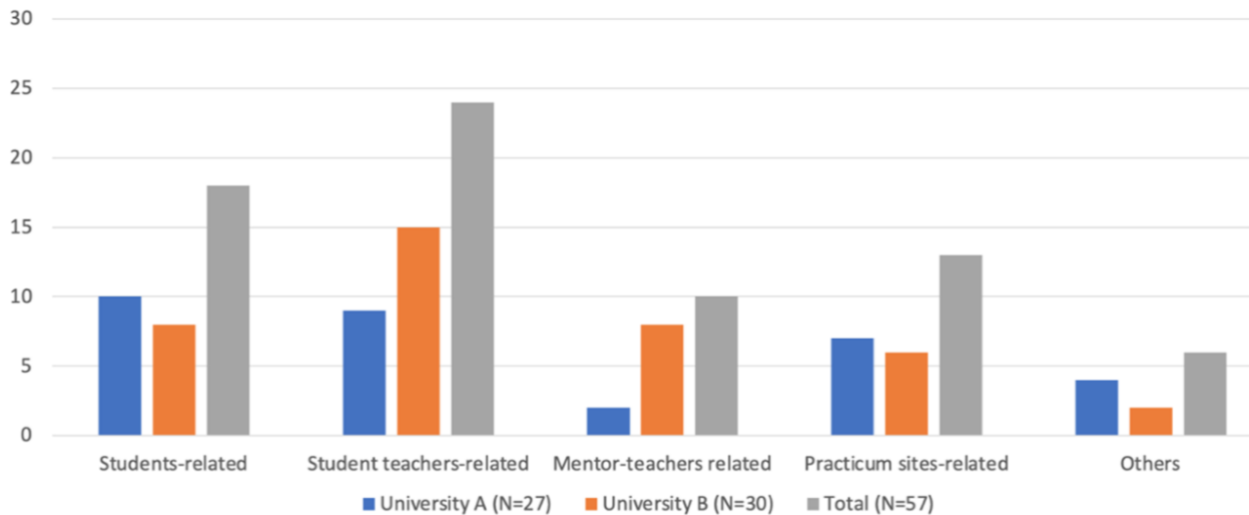
Figure 4.1. Student teachers' responses from the questionnaire concerning their experienced challenges in the teaching practicum

As can be inferred from Table 4.5 and Figure 4.1, there are four major sources of problems in the TP as perceived by EFL STs, which are, in order of frequency, STs, students, practicum sites and MTs.

Mentioned by 24 out of the 57 respondents, the most common source was the STs themselves as STs from both universities acknowledged their lack of experience, confidence, and concern about their English level. Student-related issues came second, mentioned by 18 STs from both universities. Specific challenges such as students' attitudes, disruptive behaviours and mixed-ability classrooms were identified by STs from both groups.

Challenges due to the practicum sites were mentioned by a quarter of respondents. The lack of resources or their inappropriateness were mentioned by STs from both institutions. However, inadequate facilities were mostly reported by STs from University A whilst a large number of unrelated-teaching duties were mentioned by STs from University B. Finally, although both groups mentioned challenges with MTs, University B STs found MTs a more significant challenge (8 compared to 2 of university A).

Results from the questionnaire confirm the challenges reported in the FG findings. By and large, evidence gained from the questionnaire triangulates with the data from the FGs. A new source of challenge was identified in the questionnaire as stemming from EFL STs themselves. Vietnamese EFL STs stated personal issues such as lack of confidence and experience, as causing anxiety in the TP. The issue was reported by a large number of STs, indicating that this is a significant factor influencing their learning experience. This result is in line with Merc (2010) who explained that TP was often

experienced as the most stressful part of the ELT training programme. Another interesting finding reported here is STs' concern about their English proficiency, which reflects Gan's (2013) idea that a high level of English competence, especially in productive skills, is required to enhance the confidence of EFL STs in their teaching ability.

4.4. Comparing the experience of EFL student teachers participating in two different practicum models

4.4.1. Knowledge of language teaching

Concerning the knowledge of language teaching that EFL STs think they have learnt in their TP, STs were generally positive about their ability in evaluated teaching competencies (2.2, 2.3 and 2.4). It should also be noted that STs from University A had a slightly higher mean score in all evaluated competencies compared to those from University B. However, t-tests found no statistically significant difference between the two groups. Table 4.4 presents the results of the t-tests for the comparison of EFL STs in the two universities in terms of each evaluated competency.

Competency	t	df	Sig	Mean difference
2.2. Lesson planning	1.096	68	0.277	0.714
2.3. Conducting a lesson	1.629	68	0.131	1.200
2.4. Assessment of language learning	0.466	68	0.643	0.20

Table 4.6. The results of the t-tests for the comparison of university A and university B students teachers' responses to the sub-scales of the questionnaire

Even though data from the questionnaire shows no statistically significant difference between STs from the two universities i.e., the two models, a possible explanation for the slightly higher score of STs of the traditional model (University A) in all evaluated competencies might be the influence of MTs. Accordingly, most STs of the alternative model (University B) seemed to share a rather negative view toward MTs in their TP, who were criticised as being unqualified and described as extremely unsupportive. STs from University A, on the other hand, were generally happy with their MTs despite some differences of opinion during the TP. Most importantly, they all appreciated guidance from the MTs during their first days at the host schools. This mirrors Murray-Harvey et al.'s (2000) assertion that the quality of the MTs is the key element for a successful practicum.

4.4.2. Challenges

STs from both universities experienced various difficulties during their TP (see Table 4.4 and 4.5), some of which were enduring problems of the TP (e.g., STs, MTs, students, host schools), regardless of the model. However, what is worth discussing are the internal differences on these issues from ST's point of view. STs partaking in the alternative model (University B) appeared to have doubts about the

teaching competence of their mentors, an issue not mentioned by any of STs in the traditional model (University A). However, it is worth noting that those who cast doubt on their mentors chose language centres to conduct their practicum. According to STs, teachers at language centres are unqualified as they are not professionally trained to be English language teachers.

The difference between the two groups also emerges among those conducting their practicum at host schools. Whilst STs from University A had teaching-related problems (e.g., lack of teaching resources and facility-related problems, small-sized classroom, no projector), STs from University B seemed to face an unwelcoming attitude from host schools. Part of the problem was that the host schools were neither pre-informed nor have a partnership with the training university. Additionally, most STs from University B who chose to conduct their TP at language centres reported problems related to compensation and benefits at the workplace, which was not mentioned by any STs from University A. In other words, University B STs experienced more non-teaching related problems than STs from University A.

STs in the traditional TP model seemed to face more problems with students than those of the alternative model. Accordingly, concerns about the large numbers of students and their challenging behaviours were more prominent in this group. One possible reason might lie in the different age groups that STs work with. STs from university conducted their practicum with students aged 11 – 16 whilst university B STs reported working more often with younger students aged 6 – 10. Another reason might be the number of students in each class at language centres, which is usually one-third or half the size of class sizes in public schools.

STs from University B experienced problems specifically related to the implementation of the alternative model and the training university. The requirement for the teaching practicum was not specific enough, which caused difficulties for STs in that they did not know what they needed to do. Additionally, poor communication between the training university and STs was named as a pressing problem.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1. Chapter introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings of this study. It then presents some pedagogical implications for student teachers, teacher educators and policy makers. The chapter ends by acknowledging some limitations of the current study and providing some suggestions for further research.

5.2. Key findings

This study investigated EFL STs' perceptions of their learning about language teaching and challenges experienced during the TP. EFL STs participating in two different teaching practicum models were included in this study for the purpose of comparing the two in terms of their overall experience in the TP. This research drew on domain 2 (knowledge of language teaching) of Vietnam ETCF (2012) as a framework of teaching competencies for STs to self-evaluate. Employing a mixed methods design, this research provided answers to the following questions.

RQ1: What do EFL student teachers think they have learnt about language teaching in their teaching practicum?

It can be generally concluded that Vietnamese EFL STs of this study learnt more about lesson planning, conducting a lesson (i.e., classroom management and time management) and language assessment. STs showed more confidence in the first two competencies than in language assessment as they did not have much chance to practice this skill during the TP. STs got help from MTs and improved by practicing and interacting with learners in real classroom context. Although it is not clear if STs expanded their knowledge about using technology for language teaching, what can be drawn from the data is that they had more opportunities to apply technology in their teaching due to the pandemic.

RQ2: What are the challenges EFL student teachers think they have experienced in their teaching practicum?

Consistent with previous studies, this study found that STs generally encountered problems from four main sources: STs, MTs, students and practicum sites. ST-related challenges included lack of confidence, lack of experience and concerns about their English proficiency. MTs provided inadequate support, their feedback was too general, and they often imposed their own teaching methodologies which were at odds with those taught in the training programme. Unqualified MTs was also mentioned as a MT-related challenge by STs of the alternative model (University B). Students created problems due to their disruptive behaviours which caused difficulties for STs in time management and classroom management. These difficulties were exacerbated by large class sizes and mixed abilities. In some

competitive schools, the high proficiency of students undermined STs' confidence, resulting in them doubting their competence as teachers. Finally, unwelcoming attitude and lack of teaching facilities were named as problems related to the host schools. A key difference between the two models was that University B which operates the alternative model was criticised by its STs for not providing sufficiently clear guidance and causing confusion when carrying out their TP.

RQ3. What are the differences (if any) in the perceptions of EFL student teachers participating in the two different practicum model in terms of their learning about teaching and the challenges they experienced?

Concerning knowledge of language teaching, data from the questionnaire showed that STs of the traditional TP model seemed to be generally more confident in all evaluated competencies (lesson planning, conducting a lesson and language assessment). However, no statistically significant difference between the two groups was evident (see Table 4.4).

Despite some common issues as realised, data from the FGs found internal differences between participants of the two TP models emerged as well as problems unique to each group. Both had problems with MTs but only STs of the alternative model reported dissatisfaction with MTs being unqualified and disapproval of their MT's teaching methods. Concerning student-related problems, STs of the traditional model seemed generally to experience more serious challenges than those in the alternative model. Large class size was also mentioned by most STs from University A (the traditional model) but not by University B (the alternative model) STs. On the other hand, only STs of the alternative model expressed concern about benefits and compensations at the practicum sites. Finally, it was evident that as a newly launched model, the TP model at University B was causing problems, mainly due to unclear requirements and poor communication between the training university and STs.

5.3. Implications

With regards to the findings of this study, the following implications are suggested to address some of the challenged experienced by EFL STs to enhance their learning experience in the TP. Firstly, the study raises issues about the mismatch between what STs are taught about teaching methodologies and what they encounter in practice at the practicum sites. This strongly implies a need for training institutions and practicum site MTs to explicitly discuss STs' difficulties, especially with regards to innovative practices.

Furthermore, this study reveals that EFL STs' English language competence in productive skill (i.e., speaking) seems to have an impact on their confidence in TP. An important implication is thus that language improvement courses need to be afforded a central place in the ELTE programme, with a focus on helping EFL STs improve their ability to use the language.

EFL STs of the alternative model were found to distrust the co-teachers mentoring them at their workplace since they were not qualified EFL teachers. STs thus believed they learnt nothing from these MTs. This result suggests that a careful selection of MTs based on specific criteria such as their educational background is needed for MTs to gain trust from STs. Thus, STs can have a more positive attitude towards the MTs and benefit from TP at a maximum level.

Finally, the negative experiences of STs participating in the alternative model in the workplace underlines the need for a well-established partnership between the training university and the practicum sites to create a safe community for STs to practice teaching. Moreover, all stakeholders of the TP need to be clear about their roles and others' roles to a create a shared understanding of what is expected from each actor.

5.4. Limitations and recommendations

This study sought to gain a comprehensive understanding about STs' perceptions of their TP. However, covering so many issues in a limited space inevitably leads to a lack of in-depth understanding on some issues. STs employing technology in their TP is not the focus of this study, yet it emerged in the findings due to the recent situation of the pandemic and should receive more attention. Technology for language teaching in TP also seems under researched in the literature; thus, more research is required to develop a deeper understanding of this. Second, the generalisability of these findings is limited due to a relatively small sample size. More research in different contexts is thus needed to compare and contrast with the findings of this study and provide a holistic understanding of the various implementations of TP. Finally, given the longitudinal aspect of the alternative TP model where the practicum is a prolonged process, a single study placed at the end of the entire process is not enough to explore STs' perceptions as this could change over such a long period of time. Therefore, other studies could take a longitudinal approach to gain more profound insights into how the implementation of TP model could shape or change STs' perceptions of their experience during TP.

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APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1.1. Questionnaire for EFL student teachers

I. PERSONAL BACKGROUND

1. Your gender
   o Male
   o Female
   o Other
   o Prefer not to say

2. Your age
   o 20
   o 21
   o 22
   o Other

3. Your university
   o University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University
   o Hanoi National University of Education

4. Your major
   o English language teaching
   o Other

5. Your nationality
   o Viet Nam
   o Other

6. Your year of graduation
   o 2022
   o 2023
   o Other

7. Where did you conduct your teaching practicum?
   o English language centre
   o Public schools
   o Private schools
   o International schools
   o Others

8. What age group of students do you have experience with?
   o 3 - 5 years old
   o 6 - 10 years old
   o 11 - 14 years old
   o 15 - 17 years old
   o 18+ years old

II. OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE

(Think of your most recent teaching practice experience)

	1	2	3	4	5
2.2. Please evaluate your teaching practice planning on the following statements 1 - 5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). • The teaching practicum has enabled me to:	1	2	3	4	5
1 … sketch a lesson plan before each class.					
2 … set clear objectives for my lessons.					
3 … include various learning activities that encourage students' in-class interaction (e.g., groupwork, pair work)					
4. … plan and identify the time needed for specific topics and/or activities.					
5. … arrange the learning activities in a sequence that helps students scaffold in their learning.					
2.3. Please evaluate your in-class teaching practice on the following statement 6 - 10 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). • The teaching practicum has enabled me to:	1	2	3	4	5
6 … start lessons in an engaging way (e.g., warm-up games, ice-breaking activities).					
7 … finish lessons in a focused way (e.g., reinforcement, recap).					
8 … organize my students to work in pairs and in groups effectively.					
9 … keep track of the time planned for each in-class learning activity.					
10 … modify a learning activity (e.g., its time, structure, instruction) according to its effectiveness and students' reactions.					
2.4. Please evaluate your language assessment practice on the following statements 6 - 10 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). • The teaching practicum has enabled me to:	1	2	3	4	5
11 … select ready-made tests from available resources which are relevant to the objectives and content of the curriculum.					
12 … adapt tests from available resources to make it relevant to the objectives and content of the curriculum.					
13 … design age-appropriate assignment tasks relevant to the objectives and content of the curriculum.					

Open-ended question:

What challenges did you experience during your teaching practicum?

(Follow-up study)

Would you like to be contacted for a follow-up study? You will participate in a focused group discussion that lasts for approximately 30-45 minutes with 4-5 fellows to discuss your experience in the practicum.

      o Yes
      o No

If year, please provide the following information:

1. Your name
2. Your email address

Appendix 1.2. Participant information sheet and consent form for questionnaire

Ms. Thuy Dieu Nguyen
EDU student

20 April 2022

Exploring EFL student teachers' perspectives on their learning experience in the teaching practicum

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(1) What is this study about?
You are invited to take part in a research study about you have finished your teaching practicum as an EFL student teachers.
 You have been invited to participate in this study because the perspectives of EFL student teachers on their learning experience in the teaching practicum. This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓   Understand what you have read.
- ✓   Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓   Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
- ✓   You have received a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?
The study is being carried out by the following student – Ms. Thuy Nguyen - who is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of MA TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at the University of East Anglia.
This will take place under the supervision of Dr Gulsah Kutuk (Gulsah.Kutuk@uea.ac.uk).

(3) What will the study involve for me?
You will be asked to complete an anonymous online questionnaire that encourages your reflection on your experience in the teaching practicum. The questionnaire includes three parts. The first part asks for your background information (e.g., your name, your major, your year of study). The second part asks for your professional background (e.g., your past teaching practice experience). The last part will ask for your reflection and evaluation on your past teaching experience. In general, there will be demographic questions, liker scale questions, multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. I will also ask whether you would be happy to attend an online focus group with me.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?
This questionnaire should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I have started?
You can withdraw from the study at any time before you have submitted their answers to the questionnaire. You can do this by simply closing the online questionnaire at any point. Your decision whether to participate

will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

(6) What are the consequences if I withdraw from the study?
If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time before you have submitted the questionnaire. Your answers will not be saved or sent to me before your submission. Once you have submitted it, your responses cannot be withdrawn because they are anonymous and therefore, we will not be able to tell which one is yours.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?
Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?
This study will encourage you to reflect on your teaching experience, which has you to learn from and gain insights into your teaching practice.
Student teachers' perspectives on their learning experience in the practicum is the primary source for the university officers to refer to evaluate and make necessary adaptations to the current approaching model. Moreover, data produced by participants is hoped to provide insights into the new teaching practicum model, which may benefit the field of language teaching as a whole.

(9) What will happen to information provided by me and data collected during the study?
This study is completely anonymous. The researcher will not reveal your identity in any way. The data collected will be kept confidential and access is only limited to the researcher and her supervisor. No information published will make it possible to tell who you are.

Your personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy.

The information you provide will be stored securely and your identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings will be used solely for the purposes of my dissertation, but you will not be identified in this if you decide to participate in this study.
Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. If this is not the case, the data will be destroyed following the examination of the dissertation. The deposited data will not include your name or any identifiable information about you.

(10) What if I would like further information about the study?
When you have read this information, Ms. Thuy Nguyen (Dieu.nguyen@uea.ac.uk) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

(11) Will I be told the results of the study?
You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study.
You can receive feedback from the researcher once the study is completed. A link to the summary of this study will be made available in your social media groups for you to click on and review. The result will also be sent to the teachers who previously shared the questionnaire link with you.
This feedback will be in the form of a one-page lay summary and be provided at the end of this study, by October 2022.

(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?
The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee. If there is a problem

please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:

Ms. Thuy Dieu Nguyen
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
Dieu.nguyen@uea.ac.uk

If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor: Dr Gulsah Kutuk (Gulsah.Kutuk@uea.ac.uk). If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning: Prof Yann Lebeau (Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk).

(13) How do I know that this study has been approved to take place?
To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body.

(14) What is the general data protection information I need to be informed about?
According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a university.

Our processing of your personal data will be based on Article 9(2)(j), which relates to archiving, research and statistics purposes, and Schedule 1, Part 1(4) of the DPA 2018, which relates to research.

In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

- The data controller is the University of East Anglia.
- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk in the first instance.

(15) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?
You give your consent to take part in this study by completing the questionnaire.

(16) Further information
This information was last updated on 20 April 2022.

If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by the researcher via email.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (Questionnaire)

58

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Sheet, which I may keep, for my records, and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.
- I understand that I may leave the focus group at any time if I do not wish to continue. I also understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my comments once the group has started, as it is a group discussion.
- I understand that the results of this study will be used for a dissertation assessment but that it will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.
- I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

- o Yes, I agree to participate.
- o No, I want to withdraw.

APPENDIX 2
Appendix 2.1. Questions for focus group

1. What did you learn about language teaching in your teaching practicum?

   Probes: What about lesson planning? How did you manage your students? What did you do to assess your student learning?

2. Is there any part of the teaching practicum that cause difficulty to your learning?

   Probes: What about the host school/language centre? How about your mentor/colleagues? What about the students?

3. What do you think about having/not having someone who supports (by observing and giving feedback) your teaching practice?

4. Do you want to make any changes to the teaching practicum (? If yes, what changes would you like to make?

Appendix 2.2. Participant information sheet and consent form for focus group

Ms. Thuy Dieu Nguyen
EDU student

20 April 2022

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Exploring EFL student teachers' perspectives on their learning experience in the teaching practicum

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(1) What is this study about?
You are invited to take part in a research study about EFL student teachers' perspectives on their learning experience in the teaching practicum.
You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a final year EFL student teacher and have completed your teaching practicum. This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
- ✓ You have received a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?
The study is being carried out by the following student – Ms. Thuy Nguyen - who is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of MA TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at the University of East Anglia.
This will take place under the supervision of Dr Gulsah Kutuk (Gulsah.Kutuk@uea.ac.uk).

(3) What will the study involve for me?
If you agree to participate in this research, you will participate in a focus group of up to five participants. The focus group will be conducted online via Microsoft Teams and should last approximately 1-2 hours. The transcripts of the session will be sent to you for your agreement before being presented in the final paper.
You will be asked questions regarding your learning experience in your past teaching practicum and what you could draw from this experience. There is no right or wrong answer, so please feel free to express yourself. If you allow, your answers will be recorded for later investigation.
An audio/video recording will be taken. You will have the opportunity to review information generated about you prior to publication.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?
You will have to spend 1- 2 hours in only one focus group of up to five participants after you have finished your practicum.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I have started?
Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

While taking part in the focus group, you are free to stop participating at any stage or to refuse to answer any of the questions. if you decide to attend and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw. You can do this by emailing me up to one week after I have shared the transcript of your interview with you.

(6) What are the consequences if I withdraw from the study?
If you decide to withdraw your participation from the study, unless you say that you want me to keep the data, any audio-recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in my study.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?
Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?
This study will encourage you to reflect on your teaching experience, which has you to learn from and gain insights into your teaching practice.

Student teachers' perspectives on their learning experience in the practicum is the primary source for the university officers to refer to evaluate and make necessary adaptations to the current approaching model. Moreover, data produced by participants is hoped to provide insights into the new teaching practicum model, which may benefit the field of language teaching as a whole.

(9) What will happen to information provided by me and data collected during the study?
This study is completely anonymous. The researcher will not reveal your identity in any way. The data collected will be kept confidential and access is only limited to the researcher and her supervisor. No information published will make it possible to tell who you are. Your personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy.

The information you provide will be stored securely and your identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings will be used solely for the purposes of my dissertation, but you will not be identified in this if you decide to participate in this study. Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. If this is not the case, the data will be destroyed following the examination of the dissertation. The deposited data will not include your name or any identifiable information about you.

(10) What if I would like further information about the study?
When you have read this information, Ms. Thuy Nguyen (Dieu.nguyen@uea.ac.uk) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

(11) Will I be told the results of the study?
You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study.

You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by the researcher once the study is completed. A link to the summary of this study will be made available in your social media groups for you to click on and review. The result will also be sent to the teachers who previously shared the questionnaire link with you.

The feedback will be in the form of a one-page lay summary and be provided at the end of this study, by October 2022.

(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?
The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee. If there is a problem, please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:

Ms Thuy Nguyen
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
Dieu.nguyen@uea.ac.uk

If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor: Dr Gulsah Kutuk (Gulsah.Kutuk@uea.ac.uk). If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning: Prof Yann Lebeau (Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk).

(13) How do I know that this study has been approved to take place?
To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body.

(14) What is the general data protection information I need to be informed about?
According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a University.

Our processing of your personal data will be based on Article 9(2)(j), which relates to archiving, research and statistics purposes, and Schedule 1, Part 1(4) of the DPA 2018, which relates to research.

In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

- The data controller is the University of East Anglia.
- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk in the first instance.

(15) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?
You give your consent to take part in the Focus group by filling in your information in the participant consent form. After you complete the form, please send it back to me via email.

(16) Further information
This information was last updated on 20 April 2022.
If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by the researcher via email.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (Focus group)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], **am** willing to participate in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Sheet, which I may keep, for my records, and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.
- I understand that I may leave the focus group at any time if I do not wish to continue. I also understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my comments once the group has started, as it is a group discussion.
- I understand that the results of this study will be used for a dissertation assessment but that it will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.
- I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

I consent to:

Video-recording   YES   ☐   NO   ☐

APPENDIX 3 (ENGLISH TEACHER COMTECENCY FRAMEWORK, DOMAIN 2

DOMAIN 2
KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

Competency 2.1   Language teaching methodology
Teachers understand and are able to organize learning by using a variety of strategies and techniques to integrate English listening, speaking, reading and writing for authentic purposes and to address diverse language learners.

	Primary Teacher Performance Indicators	Secondary Teacher Performance Indicators
Role of teacher & teacher talk	Equips children with language learning strategies so that they can become more autonomous. Promotes children's understanding of the value of language learning in context. Prioritizes the importance of developing children's language skills for communicative competence. Starts lessons in an engaging way (e.g. warm-up games) and finishes them in a focused way (e.g. reinforcement, recap).) Acts as a facilitator, resource and guilde in addition to an organizer of children's lesson participation. Limits amount of teacher talk to encourage children's interaction and language use.	Equips students with language learning strategies so that they can become more autonomous. Promotes students' understanding of the value of language learning in bringing more educational, career opportunities. Prioritizes the importance of developing student's language skills for communicative competence. Starts lessons in an engaging way (e.g. warm-up games) and finishes them in a focused way (e.g. reinforcement, recap). Acts as a facilitator, resource and guide in addition to an organizer of students' lesson participation. Limits amount of teacher talk to encourage students' interaction and language use.
Teaching Listening	Creates interest in subject (setting, context, characters) and provides language support to prepare children for listening. Develops children's ability in listening comprehension (through songs, chants, stories, etc.) with support (miming, pictures, etc.). Helps children to link listening with other skills. Develops the skills of discriminating between and recognizing different sounds and words.	Creates a supportive listening environment that promotes students' listening skills. Uses different activities to encourage students to develop pre-listening strategies (e.g. prior knowledge, prediction). Designs and selects different activities to practice and develop a variety of listening strategies for comprehension (e.g. listening for gist, listening for key words, difficult or unknown vocabulary, redundancy, background noise). Designs and selects different activities to help students to recognise and interpret typical features of spoken language (tone of voice, stress and intonation). Evaluates and selects post-listening tasks to provide a bridge between listening and other skills.

	Primary Teacher Performance Indicators	Secondary Teacher Performance Indicators
Teaching Speaking	Creates a supportive learning environment which promotes children's spoken interaction through repeating (games, songs, multi-sensory activities) Reduces children's anxiety and encourages them to speak confidently. Selects and uses techniques to help children develop and improve their pronunciation (sounds, stress, rhythm, and intonation). Helps children to understand and use practical classroom language (simple instructions and requests). Encourages children to listen and respond to each other to develop personal and social skills (e.g. turn-taking, working together as a team, respecting and helping other students). Selects or creates motivating activities that encourage children to practice and reproduce language areas in realistic situations.	Creates a supportive learning environment, which promotes students' spoken interaction. Uses appropriate and meaningful speaking activities to encourage all learners of mixed abilities to participate. Encourages students to speak confidently without fear of making language errors. Evaluates and selects appropriate and meaningful speaking activities focused on fluency (e.g. group work, pair work, discussion, role play, problem solving etc.). Evaluates and selects appropriate and meaningful speaking activities focused on accuracy (e.g. well staged controlled practice exercises of certain target language: grammar, word choice etc.). Encourages all students to listen and respond to each other to develop their personal and social skills (turn-taking, working together as a team[respecting and helping other students etc.). Evaluates and selects various activities to help students to identify and use spoken language (natural English: connected speech and weak forms etc.) for real life communication.

	Primary Teacher Performance Indicators	**Secondary Teacher Performance Indicators**
Teaching Reading	Evaluates and selects reading texts appropriate to children's interests and local context. Selects or creates motivating activities and provides support (e.g. brainstorming, pre teaching vocabulary) that prepare children for reading. Begins to develop the skills of reading for the main idea and for detail. Trains children to be able to link reading with other skills. Encourages children to read for pleasure taking into account their individual interests and language level. Develops children's reading comprehension (e.g. through using songs, chants, stories.) with meaning support (e.g. miming, pictures).	Evaluates and selects reading texts appropriate to students' interests and language level. Selects and recommends books for self-study appropriate to the needs, interests and language level of the students. Uses activities to encourage students to develop pre- reading strategies (e.g. prior knowledge of a topic and using prediction) to help students complete comprehension tasks. Sets different activities for students to practice and develop different reading strategies according to the purpose of reading (e.g. skimming, scanning). Helps students to develop different coping strategies when reading (e.g. difficult or unknown vocabulary, author's intention or attitude). Helps students to develop critical reading skills (e.g. reflection, interpretation, analysis). Evaluates and selects a variety of post-reading tasks to provide a bridge between reading and other skills.
Teaching Writing	Creates a supportive learning environment that combines children's speaking and writing. Selects or creates activities that stimulate children's creative writing at sentence levels. Uses activities to promote writing at paragraph level using templates.	Creates a supportive learning environment that promotes students' written interaction and develops their creativity. Provides a variety of example text types and meaningful tasks for written communication (email, letters, stories, CV and job applications). Uses a variety of techniques to help students to develop understanding of the structure, coherence and cohesion of a text and produce written texts accordingly. Helps students to understand the stages of the writing process i.e. gathering and sharing information, planning and structuring written texts (e.g. by using mind maps, outlines etc.), reflecting on, editing and improving their own writing. Uses peer-editing and feedback to assist the writing process.

Competency 2.2   Lesson Planning

Teachers understand and are able to plan effective lessons and design assignments and activities that address content and integrate skills, and help students to learn language forms and functions.

Lesson Planning	Primary Teacher Performance Indicators	Secondary Teacher Performance Indicators
Curriculum & Objectives	Identifies [national English]curriculum requirements and sets learning aims and objectives (e.g. for a school year, term) accordingly. Writes general goals and specific measurable learning objectives for a unit and lessons, and lesson components Sets objectives which help children to reach their full potential, taking into account their needs, abilities, and interests.	Identifies curriculum requirements and sets learning aims and objectives (e.g. for a school year, term) accordingly. Plans specific learning objectives for a sequence of lessons, individual lessons, and periods. Sets objectives which help students to reach their full potential, taking into account their needs, abilities, and interests.
Variety	Varies and balances lesson steps to enhance and sustain children's motivation and interest and responds to individual learning styles.	Varies and balances lesson steps to enhance and sustain students' motivation and interest and responds to individual learning styles. Plans activities allowing for a varied sequence of content and integration of skills.
Time	Identifies the time needed for specific topics and activities and plans accordingly.	Identifies the time needed for specific topics and activities and plans accordingly.
Instructions	Plans classroom language (e.g. instructions, concept checking) in a way necessary to carry out the lesson at children's level of instruction.	Prepares graded classroom language (e.g. instructions, grammatical terms) in a way necessary to carry out the lesson at students' level of instruction.
Content	Integrates relevant topics (e.g. Science, Maths, PE, Art & Craft etc.) using English. Insures appropriate content that is relevant to children's abilities, needs, and interests.)	Integrates relevant topics (e.g. History, Biology, Geography) using English. Plans to teach simple research skills (searching for information, presenting findings, etc.). Insures appropriate content that is relevant to students' abilities, needs, and interests.
Activities	Maximizes children's interaction with activities which cater for a range of learning styles (e.g. songs, games, pair work, group work).	Incorporates a variety of activities that encourage student interaction (e.g. speaking in pairs, writing in groups, role- play).

Competency 2.3 Conducting a Lesson

Teachers know how to create a supportive, meaningful learning environment and carry out the lesson plan and manage classroom activities to give students language input, opportunities for negotiation of meaning, and meaningful interaction.

Conducting a Lesson	Primary Teacher Performance Indicators	Secondary Teacher Performance Indicators
Supportive, meaningful classroom	Creates a child-friendly learning environment, including the use of praise, encouragement, problem-solving and fun classroom activities	Creates a learner-friendly learning environment, including the use of praise, encouragement, problem-solving and fun classroom activities.
Using Lesson Plans	Starts lessons in an engaging way (e.g. warm-up games) and finishes them in a focused way (e.g. reinforcement, recap) Carries out the lesson plans making smooth transitions between activities. Is flexible and can change lesson plans to respond to children's needs and interests. Notes children's performance and successes and difficulties (e.g. on the lesson plan) during the lesson to inform future planning.	Starts lessons in an engaging way (e.g. warm-up games) and finishes them in a focused way (e.g. reinforcement, recap). Carries out the lesson plans making smooth transitions between activities. Is flexible and can change lesson plans to respond to students' needs and interests. Makes assessment notes (e.g. on the lesson plan) of students (as the lesson progresses, or soon after) to inform future planning. Notes successes and difficulties (e.g. on the lesson plan) during the lesson and adjusts future lessons accordingly. Reflects on lesson content (e.g. activities, students' reaction) and uses this to inform future planning.
Classroom management	Arranges the classroom for individual, pair, group and -class work according to the lesson objectives. Gives clear and simple instructions in English (or Vietnamese where appropriate). Displays learners' work to celebrate their achievements (e.g. mini-books). Establishes classroom routines (e.g. time limits for work, raising hands, etc.). Uses and manages resources efficiently and trains learners to do the same	Arranges the classroom for individual, pair, group and whole-class work according to the lesson objectives. Gives clear and simple instructions in English (or Vietnamese when necessary). Displays students' work to celebrate their achievements (e.g. posters, class newspapers).

Competency 2.4 Assessment of Language Learning

Teachers understand formative (ongoing), and summative (progress and proficiency) assessment tools and techniques, and are able to design and use age-level-appropriate assessments to inform instruction, and to measure student progress and proficiency.

Assessment	Primary Teacher Performance Indicators	Secondary Teacher Performance Indicators
Design assessment	Designs age-appropriate assessment tasks relevant to the objectives and content of the curriculum.	Designs assessment tasks relevant to the objectives and content of the curriculum.
Ongoing assessment	Implements continuous assessment which allows all children to demonstrate their knowledge and skills (e.g., assessing in-class reading and listening comprehension activities/tasks). Uses in-class activities to monitor and assess children's participation and performance. Assesses children's ability to work independently and collaboratively.	Implements continuous assessment which allows all students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills (e.g., assessing in-class comprehension activities/tasks). Uses in class activities to monitor and assess students' participation and performance. Assesses students' ability to work independently and collaboratively.
Select assessment	Evaluates and selects valid assessment procedures (quizzes, portfolios, self-assessment, etc.) appropriate to learning aims, objectives and content.	Selects valid assessment procedures (speaking / writing tests, portfolios, peer/ self- assessment etc.) appropriate to learning aims and objectives.
Use assessment information	Identifies strengths and areas for improvement in children's performance (e.g. through role plays, story telling, quizzes and mini tests), using them to inform future planning. Use all assessment materials to write a report on children's progress and achievement.	Identifies strengths and areas for improvement in students' performance, using them to inform future lplanning. Use all assessment materials to write a report on the students' progress and achievement.

Competency 2.5 Resources

Teachers are able to use and adapt required textbooks effectively for language teaching and to locate and adapt materials and resources appropriate for students' age and language level.

Materials and Resources	Primary Teacher Performance Indicators	Secondary Teacher Performance Indicators
Select & adapt materials	Selects appropriate textbook and materials and adapts where necessary the contents of the available resources (e.g. textbooks, flash cards, pictures, websites, etc.) appropriate for children.	Selectsappropriate textbook and materials and adapts where necessary the contents of the available resources (e.g. textbooks, flash cards, pictures, websites, etc.) appropriate for children.
Resources	Knows and has access to the resources available in school (OHP, computers, library, etc.). Overcomes the organizational constraints and resource limitations that exist at school and creates self-made teaching aids. Adapts teaching accordingly.	Knows and has access to the resources available in school (OHP, computers, library, etc.). Overcomes the organizational constraints and resource limitations that exist at school and creates self-made teaching aids. Adapts teaching accordingly.
Make materials	Makes teaching aids and materials from available resources if needed. E.g. flashcards, posters Teaches and encourages children to produce materials for themselves and other learners (e.g. picture dictionaries, posters, personal books, etc.).	Makes teaching aids and materials from available resources if needed. E.g. flashcards, posters Teaches students to produce materials for themselves and other learners (e.g. presentations, dictionaries, posters, maps, personal books, etc.).
Reference materials	Recommends dictionaries (e.g. picture dictionaries) and other reference books useful to learners.	Recommends dictionaries (e.g. picture dictionaries) and other reference books useful to students.

Competency 2.6 Technology for Language Teaching
Teachers have basic computer literacy and are familiar with basic applications and uses of technology for language teaching and learning.

Technology	Primary Teacher Performance Indicators	Secondary Teacher Performance Indicators
Use technology in teaching	Promotes the use of technology to assist learning wherever possible Selects and uses available ICT materials and activities in the classroom appropriate for children including presentation tools, educational websites, blogs, social networks to assist learning (where applicable).	Promotes the use of technology to assist learning wherever possible. Selects and uses available ICT materials and activities in the classroom appropriate for children including presentation tools, educational websites, blogs, social networks to assist learning (where applicable).
Teach learners to use technology	Teaches children to use available ICT (e.g. computers, CD players, tape recorders, etc. for learning).	Teaches children to use available ICT (e.g. computers, CD players, tape recorders, etc. for learning).

APPENDIX 4 (FOCUS GROUP SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTS)

In this appendix, only answers that are relevant to the research questions are included. The full focus groups are available upon request

Groups	Pseudonyms	Graduation year	Practicum sites	Time and date	Duration
Group 1: University B	Sam (S)	2022	English language centre	06/06/2022	1 hour and 25 minutes
	Alex (A)	2022	English language centre		
	Taylor (T)	2022	English language centre		
	Jessie (J)	2022	Public high school		

Researcher (R)

[…]

R   **Is there any part of the teaching practicum that cause difficulty to your learning?**

A   To be honest, I was not happy with the centre where I worked at all. The teachers there were so unqualified. My mentor teacher still believed that we should give feedback by pointing out all mistakes that students made. I saw him stop a student speaking because of a small grammatical mistake with the article, regardless that the focus of the activity was on fluency. He was actually not really a mentor teacher; he was just someone the boss asked to help me around before I started my work.

S   Most of us ended up conducting our practicum at language centres. Some were lucky enough to find a good place, but I was not that lucky, I guess. I didn't even have a mentor. I was asked to start immediately because they were lacking teachers.

T   Which age group did you teach?

S   Just small ones, like 5 – 8 years old.

T   That's why. They often consider teaching young kids is easy and do not require much knowledge, which is completely wrong.

S   That's true! I taught little kids, so teaching was quite fun with many games and activities. However, there were some kids who were a little bit difficult to deal with. They either remained silent or just refused to do anything. I was told to just let it be, but I felt bad doing so.

A   Yes, kids can be like that. It's a bit annoying, but at least they didn't mess around.

T   And they're afraid of the teacher. So, you can be kinda powerful.

[…]

R   How about Jessie? You didn't work at a language centre, did you?

J   No, I didn't. I went to a public high school.

R   Is there anything difficult for you during that time then?

J   Generally, it was good though was a bit uneasy at first. T came to the school with an introductory letter from my university which said that I was a student teacher and would like to conduct my teaching practicum there. There were some teachers in the teachers' room, and I gave it to the headteacher. The headteacher asked me to wait outside whilst he had a word with other teachers. I overheard some teachers refused to be my MT as they were extremely busy preparing students for the national high school graduation examination. I felt a bit isolated at that time, and lonely as well. I didn't know what to d and felt like I was a burden or something. After a while, he let me in and asked me some question that I hadn't think of before. I was completely confused. Some questions like "What exactly does your university want you to do here?" and "Do you want to only teach or participate in other school activities as well?." I really had no answers because it was not documented in the practicum guideline or orally guided to us by any staff in my university.

R   So, did you finally have a mentor for you?

J   Yes, I did. She's nice. But my mentor teacher was always busy. Even though she observed some of my lessons and gave comments on what I did well and what problems existed, we had little time to discuss how I could improve, So, basically, she pointed out the issues, I looked for help from other sources to fix it myself.

[…]

R   Are there any other problems related to, for example, the new model? I guess as a new one, there might be some difficulties that you faced.

T   I'm not sure if this is what related to the practicum. However, since we had to look for the sites ourselves, I tried looking for information on the internet and saw this advertisement. They promised a well-paid job at this centre, I believed and gave them some money to apply for it. Of course, there was no such centre. I lost my money.

J   Is that Y? I heard about it before. We were warned about it every year. But I know a lot of students were deceived and also lost their money like you.

A   I was almost in the same situation with you when I was in my second year. I even went to their office and was almost beaten because I had the camera of my phone on.

[…]

T   It was a challenge to find a job as a teacher, not a teaching assistant, when you had little to no teaching experience. Even if there were English language centres that accepted 3rd or 4th year students, we normally failed in the demo teaching as part of the interview. As I felt like I didn't have much time, I ended up working at this language centre because it was the only one that let me teach.

S   Poor you really. I had a tough time trying to complete all the requirements whilst trying to handle all the deadlines at university. I felt like I should have known about the practicum content earlier when I didn't have that much workload at university.

[…]

Groups	Pseudonyms	Graduation year	Practicum sites	Time and date	Duration
Group 2: University B	Tracy (T)	2022	Public secondary school	07/06/2022	1 hour and 42 minutes
	Jane (J)	2022	International school		
	Marry (M)	2022	Public secondary school		
	Anna (A)	2022	Public high school		

Researcher (R)

R   **What did you learn about language teaching in your teaching practicum?**

A   I find that through these 10 weeks of experience, I have learnt a lot. The first is about management. I have managed teach for a period of 45 minutes and follow the lesson plan. It was a challenge because I had never had any experience in teaching a class before. It was a real challenge. But it's also quite interesting. In addition to teaching, I could also observe other teachers teach and apply their practice to mine. I also have more experience through organizing learning activities, planning and assigning tasks to students.

J   Yeah, that's true. I got to practice managing the students all the time. My mentors always told me that it's the most important task.

A   Exactly! I now understand why when I was a student, my teacher always spent time maiming orderliness and dealing with our behaviours before starting the lesson. For every activity, I had to think of how to keep everything organised to avoid wasting time.

M   It also helped managing your time as well. Once you got to manage your students, you could keep track of the time.

R   I see. How about Tracy?

T   I think I had similar experience with the other student teachers. I want to share about what I learnt from my mentor. There is one thing about lesson planning that I learnt from my MT, that is you must determine the focus of the lesson. Once you know the focus of your lesson, you can plan and prioritise activities that meet the objectives of the lesson.

J   It is. I used to plan a lot of activities because when we learnt about lesson planning at university, it always had to be very detailed with perfect timing for each activity. I used to plan an if students were going to behave that nicely so that I could carry on the lesson smoothly as planned.

T   Me too! Obviously, it was not the case in a real classroom. I was always running out of time on the first few days.

A   Exactly. I had to plan extra 5 minutes for each activity. I also had to think of how to keep everything organised to avoid wasting time.

[…]

R   Right. So how about teaching resources? Did you plenty resources to rely on?

M I'm not sure if searching for resources on the internet counts? I did it sometimes, but throughout the TP, I mostly relied on the textbooks issued by the ministry of education because it was what students had to follow. Also, we're familiar with these books.

T Yes, me too. The official textbooks provided by the Ministry.

A Well, I think we all use the same books so we're quite familiar with it. Even at university we were asked to plan according to the content of those books.

J It's a bit different for me. I had quite lots of supplementary books, but we mostly teach from the one that was pre-chosen by the school.

[…]

R **Is there any part of the teaching practicum that cause difficulty to your learning? For example, with the host schools or your mentor teachers, or students, anything.**

T My mentor teacher was nice. I really appreciate her help. However, I felt like it would be better if she left me with the students only sometimes. She's quite strict and a bit tough. Sometimes, I wanted to conduct an activity which would require students to move around. However, when I talked about it with my teacher mentor, she immediately disapproved and said that students would be disorganised and hard to manage.

M Mine was quite supportive actually, she almost let me do anything I wanted, then she would comment on what I could improve. However, I felt like the school did not have too many resources available, which I believed, was not good. For example, I found tasks in the textbooks boring, so I spent lots of time searching for supplementary teaching materials on the internet and then printing them myself.

J Talking about mentor, I was a bit disappointed with how mine provided guidance. She seemed good at her job as a teacher, but I felt like she always let me figure things out myself. Because I taught at an international school, the curriculum was different from what was provided by the Ministry. When I was asked to teach a class called "project" when students had to create something, I was simply clueless. My MT just told me that I did not need to do anything, just let my students do it. Do what?

…

A I think most of my difficulties came from the students. It was not easy dealing with them at all.

J Yes, I totally agree with you! They're nice, but they can also be a nightmare sometimes.

M Absolutely. Dealing with a class of so many students as in public schools was a real challenge. I couldn't remember their names not to mention managing them. It was lucky that my mentor was in the class all the time whenever I was teaching.

A That's right, I had to manage a class of 52 students! It was my first time. Even though we had micro-teaching at university, the number of students who were our classmates were just around 20-25. […]

M I know right? I had a class with 44 students, and they were high school students. They're more disciplined, but still, it's not an easy task. They either remained silent without really studying anything or kept chatting when they had the chance. I recruit students for my own English class, but I never accept more than 20. It is partly because my house does not have enough space, but mostly because I don't feel like I can manage more than that.

[…]

R   How about Jane? I heard you mentioned the students could be a nightmare. Is there any specific reason for you to say so?

J   Well, mine were mostly nice and disciplined. The problem I had was they were too good, so I felt a bit insecure. At international schools, the students' English was already at intermediate to upper intermediate level. Sometimes, I felt a bit incompetent because they could detect my mistakes in pronunciation or grammar when I spoke. When I gave them exercises to practice grammar, they finished quickly and started feeling bored.

A   Wow, students my school were completely in contrast. Their English was really weak.

J   But had they ever compared you with their main teacher? Mine kept doing so. They were like Ms. H told us …", or "why are you so slow on that, Ms .H would go quickly through that part". It felt not comfortable at all to be compared like that.

A   Oh, I see. I guess my students simply did not really who were teaching them because they cared more about subjects like maths or physics, like those for the university entrance exam.

T   My students did compare sometimes. However, it was kinda like they liked me better because I let them play game whilst their teacher didn't do it very often. At least not as much as I did.

[…]

R   **So, is there anything that you wish had been different?**

A   Projector! My classroom didn't have a projector. I really think that classrooms should be equipped with a projector. There were lots of activities that I wanted to do but I couldn't because of this lacking. A simple game like lucky number would be much more engaging and less time-consuming if it was computer-assisted, just like what we had at university when we microtaught.

M   I wish the classrooms were bigger. Mine was too small for 44 students.

A   Yeah! I want it as well. I even had more students than that. Students didn't have enough space to play some games. They had to sit still all the time.

[…]

Groups	Pseudonyms	Graduation year	Practicum sites	Time and date	Duration
Group 3: University A	Tim (T)	2022	Public secondary school	08/06/2022	2 hours
	Kyle (K)	2022	Public high school		
	Charlie (C)	2022	Public high school		
	Lily (L)	2022	International school		
	Jasmine (J)	2022	Public secondary school		

Researcher (R)

R   **What did you learn about language teaching in your teaching practicum?**

[…]

J   There were lessons that I only finished one third of the plan before the bell rang as I included too many activities. Then time after time, I reduced the number of activities and planned on the focus. Now, I am quite confident that I could finish any lesson in the allocated time.

L   My mentor also told me that I had improved my timing.

[…]

R   How about assessment? Did you have a chance to assess your student learning?

K   My mentor asked me to monitor some 45-minute tests. Then she also let me mark it.

C   I didn't even have chance for that not to mention designing anything. But I did design some small tasks to check what students have learnt in the previous lesson.

T   I also designed some vocabulary tests, which included multiple choice questions because it was easy to mark. However, the results of these tests did not affect students' academic reports, so they did not take it very seriously.

[…]

R   Did you have any chance to apply technology in your teaching?

K   Yes. I often sued Quizizz and Quizlet to have students review new words or grammar. It was fun and they liked it.

T   I quite enjoy designing the Slide because I like designing as well. I feel like if the presentation was nice, students would be more engaging in the lesson. Well but it was not always the case.

L   I also used Quizizz and Baamboozle. Baamboozle was fun as you can have the class play as teams whilst they didn't necessarily need an electronic device.

C   Like the others, I also used such online platforms and some others. I think it is partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic when we had to learn online, our teachers also employed these tools.

[…]

R   **Is there any part of the teaching practicum that cause difficulty to your learning? For example, with the host schools or your mentor teachers, or students, anything.**

K   I think most school staff were nice to us. But the one that I wish he was nicer was my mentor. My mentor was usually absent from my lesson. He assigned me a class and a lesson to teach, and I hardly had time to discuss with him.

T   My mentor was okay. I'm quite happy and feel lucky actually. I know that some friends of mine didn't have a very good experience with their mentor. It was really bad luck for them. I think a good mentor is a decisive factor for a successful practicum.

K   Yes, I can totally understand that. At least, they are the ones that I look at to see whether I like the experience or not.

J   Mentor teacher was really something. I mean mine was supportive, she gave me a lot of helpful advice. But sometimes, I we just didn't see eye to eye. When I taught about the "s" ending sound pronunciation of, I told students to forget all about the ending letter rules but learn about voiced and voiceless sound instead. When my mentor found out, she was not happy with me and asked me to stop applying advanced theory because students would not get it. I understood that she wanted to the students to be able to do the exercises easily. But I think the method was a bit mechanical.

C   I agree with Jasmine. I always had to see the attitude of my mentor teacher first before doing anything. There were lessons when I wanted to show some interesting videos to the students, which could be time-consuming according to my teacher mentor. So, most of the time, I couldn't do it if my teacher mentor was observing.

[…]

R   How about Lily?

L   I actually did not have any complaints about my mentor. I was more in trouble with the students. In both class that I taught, there were always some naughty ones. In one of my classes, there was this boy who was a real challenge for me. If I put him in a group, he was always distracting other students and never spoke English. I wasted lots of time dealing with his attitude and behaviour.

K   Yes, we can never forget about the students right. There will always be some troublemakers in any classes.

C   I chose to ignore them in most cases. I did try but it didn't seem work. I had to take care of other students as well.

T   They're such bad apples.

L   Yes, sometimes they could be really distracting and affect other students.

[…]

R   **So, is there anything that you wish had been different?**

C   Can I change the students?

K   If that's possible, I wish I could as well.

T   I wanted to change to another school as mine was located near a construction, which was noisy throughout the lessons"

[…]

Groups	Pseudonyms	Graduation year	Practicum sites	Time and date	Duration
Group 4: University A	Laura (L)	2022	English language centre	08/06/2022	1 hour and 41 minutes
	Sarah (S)	2022	English language centre		
	Quinn (Q)	2022	English language centre		
	Harley (H)	2022	English language centre		

Researcher (R

R **What did you learn about language teaching in your teaching practicum?**

Q I've learnt a lot but not necessarily about language teaching but more like about a classroom setting, like to experience the feeling of having your own class.

R Can you clarify it?

Q I would say I learn more about how everything works in a real classroom. You need to manage your students to do different tasks, to plan ahead and conduct different activities during the class time.

R So, you mean lesson planning and classroom management?

Q Classroom management yes, but not really lesson planning. I actually had the plans available, but they were not good. I needed to amend a lot of activities after some first days following the provided plans. They were not good at all, and students got bored. So, I had to look for more games and activities to add in a lesson.

H That's actually quite common at language centres. I guess if you worked for the money only, you would not care about the provided plan. It's time consuming to prepare some games, isn't it?

Q Yeah true, but of course I couldn't do that. Lots of their lesson plan activities did not make sense to me, but I could not find anyone to talk about it. Sometimes I went to my university teachers to ask for some suggestions to improve the plans as well. But I couldn't go to her all the time.

S My experience was a bit different. I was not provided with a plan and was free to do whatever I wanted. I was given coursebooks, Friends and Family series, and was asked to teach one unit per lesson. I basically just followed the tasks in the students' books and teacher's book. However, it was not a good idea to rely totally on the books. I taught kids aged from 6-8. In the first lesson, I had extra 30 minutes and students seemed bored with the worksheets I gave them. I then learnt to include more physical activities that took more time, and alternate stir-up activities with settle-down activities in class to manage the students as well.

R That's nice. So, you modify your teaching based on the students?

S   Yes, I guess so. At least I did not have to buy the time in class anymore. I think it's always better to be running out of time than to running out of activities.

R   How about Laura?

L   I also had better timing in class after a while. However, my initial problem was different. I did not have enough time to finish everything in the slide provided by my centre. I taught TOEIC and thus the knowledge in each lesson was heavy. At first, I tried to finish everything and found it impossible. Then I turn to assign the uncompleted tasks to students as homework.

R   Okay. How about language assessment? Did you assess your students' learning?

Q   Yeah, I did. But it's more like an end-of-course test. Everything was quite ready-made. I was told exactly which test to take from which book. My students were mostly kids of 5-6 years old, so it was quite effortless.

H   Yeah, same to me as well. We used tests for Starters, Movers, Flyers from Cambridge.

S   Wow we also follow it. In my centre, there were Starter class, Mover class and Flyer class. We gave them Cambridge books and Cambridge tests at the end of the course.

L   As I already said, I taught TOEIC, so testing was basically I just let students do parts of the TOEIC writing and listening tests.

R   It seems like you all had lot of teaching resources available to select form, didn't you? So how did you use those materials to support your teaching?

Q   There are some supplementary books readily available in my centre. However, I didn't find them very helpful. I often asked for my university teacher's suggestion for more interesting resources for my students.

S   Well actually, not so many. Just some well-known English books from well-known publications like Oxford or Cambridge. However, if I needed supplementary resources, we had to look for it myself.

[…]

R   **Is there any part of the teaching practicum that cause difficulty to your learning?**

H   To be honest I have been waiting to talk about this. Actually, I was not very happy with my teaching practicum. I found a job at this language centre simply to quickly complete that requirement. Because I was in my final year, I didn't have much time left to complete the portfolio. I struggled a lot at this centre, which was small and unprofessional, and I regretted the time spent here. That was when I wished our university didn't let us go freely like that.

S   Yes, it is! I feel the same as well. It's not easy to find a good centre as there were so many, and most were not professional at all. As we were students at that time, we could not work full time and had to add up the total working time from different part-time teaching jobs in a long time to make it equivalent to 240 hours. To be honest, it seemed a lot in our portfolio, but I doubt the legitimacy of each teaching job because we could even add 1-1 tutoring as teaching. So, what is the focus? Are we assessed based on the quantity or the quality of our work?

L   Well, I know some of my friends faked the reflections. Some jobs like tutoring were really not difficult to fake.

Q   I think I can spend the whole day talking about how problematic the new practicum is.

R   Okay so you all feel having difficulties with the design of the practicum?

Q   Exactly, I personally prefer the old one.

L   I actually like it to some extent, not entirely of course. However, it did give me some freedom and flexibility.

S   Yes, I agree with L, but for the most part, it was quite problematic, in many ways.

R   Can you give some examples?

S   Like, for example, I felt quite weak and alone during the time working there. When there's a problem, I could hardly find anyone to discuss it with. I was stressed and frustrated because the ones that should help did not provide any help at all. They knew more about the students and the teaching requirements there than my university teacher. Why didn't they help?

H   I didn't have anyone either. I had to figure out everything myself. It seemed good that you learnt and discovered yourself, but at the same time, I was not sure whether what I was doing was right.

R   How about the other teachers there? Didn't you ask for help from them?

H   Well, it was not as expected. One reason why I regretted the experience was because it did not recruit qualified teachers. I could barely learn anything from them. I was asked to observe some classes first before starting to work. A typical lesson was all about the teacher writing vocabulary on the board with Vietnamese translation and students copying in their notebooks. She did not encourage student participation at all. She didn't really know or care how detrimental this method can be to students. I felt that I knew more about teaching than her, which was the truth because they became teachers by experience, not by qualified teacher training like what I had.

L   Do you know why they hire people like that? This has always driven me crazy. They just want to make benefit. If they hired qualified teachers, they had to pay more and make less benefit. I was paid a very minimum wage for every teaching hour, and I was asked to do tons of work from planning to teaching to assessing. Sometimes, I felt as if I was exploited because I was still a university student.

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