
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teaching Practicum: Learning Journey Platform for Promoting Pre-Service Teachers' Instructional Skills

Regina Wibawanti¹, Nanda Putri², Tiara Sephani³, Misdi⁴ ✉ and Aisyah⁵

¹²³English Education Department, Swadaya Gunung Jati University, Cirebon, Indonesia.

⁴⁵English Education Lecturer, English Education Department, Swadaya Gunung Jati University, Cirebon, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: Misdi, **E-mail:** misdirina@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

Teaching practicum provides an opportunity for pre-service teachers to enhance their teaching skills. This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological design method to investigate the role of teaching practice in enhancing the instructional skills of pre-service English teachers at the elementary school level. Three pre-service English teachers participated in the study. Data were collected from the participants through reflections on their teaching practicum experiences. The findings indicated that the pre-service teachers initially experienced strong emotions and assumptions when they began teaching, yet the quality of their teaching improved during the practice. Teaching practicum was further identified as an effective means to enhance the teaching skills of pre-service English teachers.

| KEYWORDS

Teaching practicum, English pre-service teachers' experiences, instructional skills, reflective teaching, elementary school.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 15 May 2024

PUBLISHED: 29 May 2024

DOI: 10.32996/jeltal.2024.6.2.11

1. Introduction

A teaching practicum can help pre-service teachers polish their teaching skills in real classroom settings. This experience can provide difficulties and possibilities for direct interaction with pupils, thereby shaping the pre-service teacher's potential. The primary goal of the classroom teaching practicum experience is to allow pre-service teachers to learn about their future teaching responsibilities, improve their pedagogical abilities, and establish their professional identity (Lawson et al., 2015). A teaching practicum allows pre-service teachers to become acquainted with their future professional practices while learning about the work of instructors in schools. A teaching practicum can also assist pre-service instructors in reflecting on their views and recognizing their faults and skills in teaching (Numrich, 1996, as cited in Ersanli, 2016). Pre-service teachers believe that teaching practicum is beneficial for developing professional abilities and experience (Alakus et al., 2005; Gürbüz, 2006, as cited in Ersanli, 2016). These abilities will be valuable in pre-service teachers' future teaching professions because they have obtained real-world classroom experience. This practicum also allows pre-service teachers to gain experience in a variety of teaching roles, school activities, and organizational structures (Beshir et al., 2023). This experience allows pre-service teachers to put theory into practice in the classroom (Becker et al., 2019).

According to Kakazu and Kobayashi's (2023) research findings, practical teaching experience can assist pre-service teachers in understanding how vital it is to gain the information and abilities required to operate as a teacher before joining the industry. According to Zhu et al. (2022), teaching practicum can improve pre-service teachers' transformational perceptions of their roles as teachers, expand their professional knowledge, solve problems in building good relationships with students, and help them form their professional identity. Mak et al. (2022) found that teaching practicum has the advantage of developing teacher competency because pre-service teachers gradually build and apply their knowledge and teaching abilities in the classroom. According to

Noguera and McCluskey (2015), teaching practicums allow pre-service teachers to apply what they learn in teacher education programs to their classroom practice. According to Yung's (2020) research, teaching practicum allows pre-service teachers to learn more about school management, teachers' professional lives, and their identity as educators. Lave & Wenger (1991) based their theory of situated learning on practicum teaching experiences where pre-service teachers interact with students, mentors, and other learning environments, emphasizing the importance of grounding learning in social and practical contexts. As a result, they can improve and increase the effectiveness of their teaching abilities.

2. Literature Review

Fischetti et al. (2021) state that teaching practicum can help pre-service teachers become more confident, create a variety of lessons for their students, understand their pedagogy, and assist in classroom management. According to research by Martins et al. (2015), pre-service teachers' teaching experience has a significant impact on their confidence. Beshir et al. (2023) state that teaching occurs either after the academic year, when students have completed all learning theories without theory, or when they have integrated the theories they have learned in the classroom with their experiences. According to Lindström et al. (2022), a tutoring lecturer oversees the teaching practicum and assists the pre-service teachers' students in learning planning, providing feedback, and acting as a teaching guide. According to research by Takala et al. (2023), teaching experiences help pre-service teachers develop their professional skills quickly and thoroughly, but they can also be stressful for some individuals.

Priyatno et al. (2023) conducted research on the professional development journey of pre-service English Language (EFL) teachers in Indonesia during a two-month teaching practice period at a private high school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This qualitative study used a narrative methodology and included two female candidates for English teaching positions. The results showed that the process of socialization in schools affected how they identified themselves as EFL teachers and reflected emerging identities. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of reflection in understanding the professional socialization experience of future EFL teachers during teaching practicum.

Despite the abundance of literature addressing the role of teaching practicum in improving pre-service English teachers' teaching skills, there is still a notable gap in the exploration of teaching practicum in the primary school sector in Indonesia. This sector has not been extensively researched, so there are still few studies that specifically address the challenges and benefits that exist in this context. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by investigating the experiences of pre-service English teachers during their teaching practicum in primary schools in Indonesia. The aim is to examine whether experiences during their teaching practicum in the Indonesian primary school sector can contribute to the development of their teaching skills.

3. Methodology

3.1 Designs

The methodology employed in this study utilizes a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the development of pre-service teachers' instructional skills during their teaching practicum. According to Flynn and Koruska (2018), the main goal of theoretical design is to investigate phenomena as people experience or perceive them. This approach is particularly suited for understanding pre-service teachers' perspectives, emotions, and behaviors during their classroom teaching experiences.

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study comprised pre-service English teachers from a private university in Cirebon. To collect relevant and reliable data from participants, recruiting criteria were used. First, they received teaching practice training during their education. Second, they were experienced pre-service teachers who had more than 2 months of teaching practicum experience in elementary schools. Third, they have experience in teaching English in an elementary school. Fourth, they wrote reflective teaching after teaching in the classroom. Fifth, they consented to participate in this study and signed the consent form provided. These criteria were used to help seek potential participants. The participants were chosen from a list of pre-service teachers in the English Education Department at a private university in Cirebon who had completed the seventh semester of their studies, showing that they had adequate teaching knowledge and experience. Three pre-service English teachers who received the agreement letter via email returned the consent form, confirming that they had willingly decided to participate in this study. Table 1 shows the participants' demographics.

Table 1. Participant demographics

| Participant | Name (Pseudonym) | Sex | Age (years) | Teaching experiences |
|-------------|------------------|--------|-------------|---|
| 1 | Lia | Female | 21 | 4 months of teaching assistance experience in the <i>Kampus Mengajar</i> program with two times of English teaching practicum experiences in a public elementary school in Cirebon. She has received teaching practice training in a micro-teaching course at a private university in Cirebon. |
| 2 | Manda | Female | 22 | 4 months of teaching assistance experience in the <i>Kampus Mengajar</i> program with two times English teaching practicum experiences in a public elementary school in Cirebon. She has received teaching practice training in a micro-teaching course at a private university in Cirebon. |
| 3 | Nurul | Female | 22 | 4 months of teaching assistance experience in the <i>Kampus Mengajar</i> program with four times of English teaching practicum experiences in a public elementary school in Cirebon. She has received teaching practice training in a micro-teaching course at a private university in Cirebon. |

These participants met all the criteria for the research and voluntarily chose to participate in the study. Before commencing the research, all participants were provided with information regarding the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants, following the university's consent protocol. The researcher ensured that participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any point during its duration. Furthermore, participants were assured of full access to the research data, which would be securely stored in a dedicated online repository for five years for future research purposes. Following this period, all data will be securely destroyed unless participants indicate otherwise. To maintain confidentiality, participants' identities will be anonymized in any publications and will be addressed in this research as Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3, as detailed in Table 1.

3.3 Data collection procedure

The data for this qualitative phenomenological design were derived from the perspectives of pre-service English teachers who had engaged in teaching at public elementary schools. To acquire extensive qualitative information to comprehend the pre-service English teachers' perspectives on their teaching practicum journey to improve their instructional abilities, one-on-one semi-structured interviews and written reflection teaching were carried out for each participant. The interview included several open-ended questions designed to emphasize their perspectives, emotions, and behaviors from their classroom teaching experience. For efficiency reasons and to avoid miscommunication, the individual interviews were conducted online via Zoom Meet in about 20–30 minutes using Bahasa Indonesia. At the end, the interview sessions were transcribed, translated into English, and returned to the participants for verification. Meanwhile, written reflective teaching is used as supporting data in this research. The written reflective teaching was done by the participants right after they did the teaching practicum during the *Kampus Mengajar* program. This is because reflective teaching is a weekly activity report that needs to be done and uploaded to the Teaching Campus website. The pre-service English teachers engaged in reflective practices to evaluate their teaching activities. Reflective teaching has long been recognized as a pivotal element in the early professional development of pre-service teachers (Hendriwanto, 2021).

3.4 Data analysis

The transcribed interview data and reflection data were then processed through a sorting and coding process. The data sorting stage was done selectively, where the participants' teaching reflection data that was relevant to the research focus was carefully sorted out. When the data included a phrase or statement linked to a research question, they were highlighted and marked as initial coding (Luthfiyyah, Aisyah, and Sulisty, 2021). After that, it was followed by the coding stage, where the data was converted into several paragraphs containing the title, description, and essence of each paragraph. The analyzed data was sent to the participants for confirmation. After receiving feedback and confirmation from the participants regarding the accuracy of the data processing results in line with their experience in their teaching, the results could be discussed further by the researchers.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Initial feelings of pre-service English teachers during their first teaching practicum in the classroom.

The first teaching experience was memorable. When there is a lack of preparation for first-time teaching, a variety of emotions develop. There are also anxious feelings for the first instructional activity, such as worry, restlessness, lack of confidence, and uneasiness. These negative preconceptions stem from the enormous responsibility and uncertainty regarding student answers and their ability to teach the subject successfully, according to the participants.

"Before entering the classroom, I often feel worried and unsure of myself. The accompanying anxiety makes me uneasy, restless, and worried about what will happen in class." (Participant 2)

Feelings of worry, fear, and uncertainty about particular situations or events are frequently associated with restlessness and anxiety. This can cause physical and mental tension, as well as disturbances in concentration and decision-making. Psychological factors such as assessment of teaching practicum and anxiety have a stronger influence on pre-service teachers' confidence in the profession than other traits such as gender and primary subject. Pre-service Teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management, teaching-related stress, and contextual factors all have a significant impact on work commitment and willingness to resign (Daniels et al., 2006; Klassen and Chiu, 2011, as cited in Tran Le Huu Nghia & Huynh Ngoc Tai, 2019). Participant 3 added that nervousness can arise due to a lack of preparation for teaching, both in terms of materials and supporting learning media.

"The first feeling before entering the class was that I felt very nervous because that day was my first time teaching English at school." At that time, there was a significant lack of preparation, both in terms of materials and learning media. (Participant 3)

However, over time, these negative assumptions can transform into confidence as you witness positive developments from students in the classroom during your teaching practicum. This is exemplified by Participant 1's experience.

"The enthusiastic response from the students not only boosted my confidence but also helped me overcome my worries, proved that I was able to deliver the material well, and reinforced my belief that I could successfully teach them." (Participant 1)

All participants agreed that the first experience of teaching often creates excitement and negative assumptions for pre-service teachers. Excitement arises because it is the first step in their teaching career, but negative assumptions also arise because of the great responsibility and uncertainty about student responses and their ability to deliver the material well (Misdi, Rachmawaty, Hartini, Nurhadi, and Hendriwanto, 2021). Chinese student teachers expressed a wide range of emotions in a relevant study by Zhu (2017), including excitement and anxiety at the beginning of the teaching practicum and surprise and embarrassment at the end. Pre-service teachers highly rated direct experience with ELL (English Language Learners) students in learning settings, which effectively increases positive attitudes and self-efficacy in providing appropriate instructional support (Mahalingappa et al., 2018). This strengthens the conviction that classroom experience and teaching practicum opportunities can enhance teaching skills. This improvement encourages the determination to move forward in the development of teaching skills with the hope of creating an engaging and effective learning environment.

4.2 Improving the quality of pre-service English teachers can be achieved by having teaching experience during the Teaching Practicum.

Anxiety is common during teaching practice. Pre-service teachers who lack provision in their teaching practicum may experience this sensation, thereby reducing the quality of their teaching. Having a lot of teaching practicums is one of several ways to achieve high-quality teaching. The second participant's experience sheds light on this.

"After teaching twice, I felt a decrease in the intensity of anxiety that I often experienced. It made me more comfortable giving ice-breaking to students. This teaching practicum has been a source of inspiration for me to continue developing my skills as an educator, intending to improve the quality of teaching." (Participant 2)

The teaching practicum leads to reflections on satisfaction, accomplishment, responsibility, and self-evaluation. Previous preparation becomes more structured and well-prepared, allowing for a better knowledge of student requirements as well as the development of effective learning material and instructional practices. According to Kusriandi et al. (2022), a teacher must become more aware of learning design in order to provide high-quality education. This lesson teaches students how to customize commercial material to meet their requirements. Furthermore, they examine elements that might influence the effectiveness of school reform efforts to increase student performance through effective implementation techniques. More planned and sophisticated previous preparation allows for a better understanding of students' needs, as well as the development of effective teaching techniques and learning tools.

"After a second teaching practicum, pre-class preparation for teaching becomes well-arranged, structured, and planned. For instance, being able to effectively open and close lessons, directing students' attention during instruction, having a deeper awareness of the requirements of students, and creating effective instructional materials and teaching strategies." (Participant 1)

Furthermore, positive responses from students also positively impact teachers, encouraging instructors to keep trying to deliver high-quality instruction. Third participants stated that, based on their experiences, this can occur because of well-preparedness, which can boost a teacher's confidence. The experience of Participant 3 illustrates this point.

"The positive student response increased my enthusiasm and motivated me to teach well." (Participant 3)

A teaching practicum allows teachers to become more prepared, understand their students' needs, overcome nervousness, and develop successful learning practices. The teaching practicum also allows for reflection on responsibility, achievement, and self-evaluation, all of which help to improve teaching quality. Good student feedback motivates instructors to continue improving their instruction, and well-planned and successful sessions may boost teachers' confidence.

4.3 Teaching Practicum can develop the instructional skills of pre-service English teachers.

Pre-service teaching practicum in elementary schools provides English teachers with a variety of benefits, including increased knowledge, pedagogical abilities, and interpersonal skills. This practicum is critical for pre-service teachers because it teaches them how to successfully manage the classroom and adapt teaching strategies to meet the needs of each student, thereby improving their English teaching skills.

"Teaching practicum allows pre-service teachers to test various teaching styles, solve classroom problems, and build the interpersonal skills required to communicate with students. For example, a pre-service English teacher may have studied several grammar teaching techniques, but only through teaching experience will he or she know which strategies are most efficient in assisting students in comprehending those grammar principles." (Participant 1)

A teaching practicum is essential for pre-service teachers, especially those in English language education because it gives a complete grasp of classroom dynamics and effective teaching techniques. These strategies help teachers manage a variety of classroom circumstances, identify each student's individual requirements, and learn to adapt their teaching methods.

"As a pre-service teacher, I value teaching practice, particularly in English, because it provides a full understanding of how classroom dynamics evolve, as well as effective teaching tactics." "Through teaching practicum, I gain the ability to interact directly with students and deal with a variety of scenarios and situations that may arise, such as noisy classrooms and toddlers who cry and refuse to be silent." (Participant 2)

Aside from that, pre-service teachers must have a teaching practicum to acquire skills and a thorough understanding. There are numerous advantages to gaining a teaching practicum as a pre-service teacher.

"There are various reasons why teaching practicum is important for pre-service teachers. One benefit of the teaching practicum is the ability to gain insight into effective classroom management. One example is maintaining a pleasant classroom environment so that students can focus during learning time. Furthermore, through teaching practicum, a teacher can tailor communication and learning approaches to the needs of their students." (Participant 3)

Everyone who took part acknowledged that the teaching practicum had numerous advantages for enhancing the instructional skills of future English teachers. They also felt that teaching practicum is an excellent way to improve your understanding of how to manage a classroom and construct effective learning strategies.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine whether experiences during teaching practicum in the Indonesian elementary school sector contribute to the development of pre-service English teachers' instructional skills. The findings reveal that the journey of pre-service teachers is initially marked by anxiety and uncertainty, which gradually transform into confidence and enthusiasm as they gain practical experience and witness positive student outcomes. Teaching practicum emerged as a crucial platform for refining teaching skills, understanding student needs, and developing effective instructional strategies. It allows pre-service teachers to experiment with various teaching styles, address classroom challenges, and build essential interpersonal skills. However, this study faced several limitations. The sample size was relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should aim to include a more diverse sample of pre-service teachers across different regions in Indonesia to enhance the generalizability of the results. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term impacts of teaching practicum experiences on instructional skills. Such future research endeavors would be invaluable in continuing to improve teacher education programs and ultimately enhancing the quality of English language instruction in elementary schools.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-3543-0823

References

- [1] Alakus AO, Oral B and Mercin L. (2005). Güzel sanatlar eğitimi bölümü öğretmen adaylarının okul deneyimi II uygulamasına ilişkin algıları. *Milli Eğitim*, 168(33): 143-154.
- [2] Ardi, P., Mukti, T. W. P., Basthomi, Y., & Widiati, U. (2023). Delving into Indonesian EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Professional Identity Configuration in Teaching Practicum. *REFlections*, 30(2), 223-246.
- [3] Beshir, S., Dagnaw Kelkay, A., & Melesse, T. (2023). Perceptions of practicum actors in the primary teacher education practicum program. *Cogent Education*, 10(1), 2206628.
- [4] Becker, E., Waldis, M., & Staub, F. (2019). Advancing student teachers' learning in the teaching practicum through content-focused coaching: A field experiment. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 83, 12–26.
- [5] Gürbüz, N. (2006). Perceptions of teacher candidates about school experience I and II courses/Öğretmen adaylarının okul deneyimi I ve II dersleriyle ilgili algıları. *Çukurova University Faculty of Education Journal*, 3(32), 67-72.
- [6] Lawson, T., Çakmak, M., Gündüz, M., & Busher, H. (2015). Research on teaching practicum—a systematic review. *European journal of teacher education*, 38(3), 392-407.
- [7] Lindström, L., Löfstöm, E., & Londén, M. (2022). Supervising teachers' orientations and conceptions about content and process in teaching practice. *Educational Studies*, 1-18.
- [8] Fischetti, J., Ledger, S., Lynch, D., & Donnelly, D. (2022). Practice before practicum: simulation in initial teacher education. *The Teacher Educator*, 57(2), 155-174.
- [9] Flynn, S. V., & Korcuska, J. S. (2018). Credible phenomenological research: A mixed-methods study. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 57(1), 34-50.
- [10] Hendriwanto. (2021). A reflective teaching practicum as a platform for stimulating pre-service teachers' professional development. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 47(4), 624-626.
- [11] Kakazu, K., & Kobayashi, M. (2023). Student teachers' development through a first-time teaching practicum and challenges: a qualitative case study approach. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 49(3), 401-415.
- [12] Kusriandi, W., Mujianto, J., Fitriani, S. W., & Rukmini, D. (2022). Prepare Prospective Teachers To Teach EFL Through Teaching Practice Using Technology. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(8), 3909-3921.
- [13] Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- [14] Luthfiyyah, R., Aisyah, A., & Sulisty, G. H. (2021). Technology-enhanced formative assessment in higher education: A voice from Indonesian EFL teachers. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature and Culture*, 6(1), 42-54.
- [15] Mahalingappa, L., Hughes, E. M., & Polat, N. (2018). Developing preservice teachers' self-efficacy and knowledge through online experiences with English language learners. *Language and Education*, 32(2), 127-146.
- [16] Mak, P., Yang, M., & Yuan, R. (2023). Fostering teacher competence through classroom-based research during field experiences. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 49(5), 841-856.
- [17] Männikkö-Barbutiu, S., Rorrison, D., & Zeng, L. (2011). Memorable Encounters: Learning Narratives From Preservice Teachers' Practicum. In *A practicum turn in teacher education* (pp. 45-66). Brill.
- [18] Martins, M., Costa, J., & Onofre, M. (2015). Practicum experiences as sources of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(2), 263-279.
- [19] Misdı, M., Rachmawaty, D., Hartini, N., Nurhadi, K., & Hendriwanto, H. (2021). The emotional geography of a female EFL pre-service teacher in teaching practicum: Voice from initial teacher education. *Langkawi: Journal of the Association for Arabic and English*, 7(1), 106-118.
- [20] Numrich, C. (1996). On becoming a language teacher: Insights from diary studies. *Tesol Quarterly*, 30(1), 131-153.
- [21] Salazar Noguera, J., & McCluskey, K. (2017). A case study of early career secondary teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for teaching: lessons from Australia and Spain. *Teacher Development*, 21(1), 101-117.
- [22] Takala, M., Sutela, K., Ojala, S., & Saarinen, M. (2023). Teaching practice in the training of special education teachers in Finland. *European journal of special needs education*, 38(6), 835-849.
- [23] Tran Le Huu Nghia & Huynh Ngoc Tai. (2019). Preservice teachers' experiences with internship-related challenges in regional schools and their career intention: implications for teacher education programs. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 40:2, 159-176,
- [24] Yangin Ersanli, C. (2015). A comparative analysis of practicum in English language teacher education: Turkey, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan cases. *The Anthropologist*, 21(3), 461-473.
- [25] Yung, K. W. H. (2020). Becoming a teacher educator through being a student teacher: an autoethnography in the practicum. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(2), 248-250.
- [26] Zhu, G. (2017). Chinese student teachers' perspectives on becoming a teacher in the practicum: Emotional and ethical dimensions of identity shaping. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 43(4), 491-495.
- [27] Zhu, G., Rice, M., Li, G., & Zhu, J. (2022). EFL student teachers' professional identity construction: A study of student-generated metaphors before and after student teaching. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 21(2), 83-98.