Challenges in ELT Practicum: Views and Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an extract from an MA thesis that focuses on the challenges that pre-service teachers in the department of English face during their senior year practicum program. The aim of the study is to find out the perspective of pre-service teachers when it comes to the different factors that make the practicum program challenging. A questionnaire was prepared to obtain data from (107) students from three different universities in the Kurdistan Region. The quantitative data collected revealed that most of the pre-service teachers believe that the practicum program is too short to give them real teaching experience and that they do not have time to reflect on their own teaching. Some

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other challenges observed during the study are related to the school administrators, the school teachers, and the students' supervisor.

Key Words: practicum**,** practice teaching, pre-service teacher.

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التحديات في التدريب العملي لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية: آراء وتصورات معلمي ما قبل الخدمة

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الــمستخلــص

تعتبر الدراسة الحالية مقتطف من رسالة ماجستير حيث تركز على التحديات التي يواجهها معلمو ما قبل الخدمة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية خلال برنامج التدريب العملي للمرحلة الأخيرة . ان الهدف من الدراسة هو التعرف على وجهة نظر معلمي ما قبل الخدمة عندما يتعامل الأمر بالعوامل المختلفة التي تجعل برنامج التدريب العملي صعبا ولهذا أُعِدَّت استبانة للحصول على بيانات من(107) طلاب من ثلاث جامعات مختلفة في إقليم كوردستان .كشفت البيانات الكمية التي جُمِعَت أن معظم المعلمين قبل الخدمة يعتقدون أن برنامج التدريب العملي قصير جدًا بحيث لا يمنحهم خبرة تعليمية حقيقية، وليس لديهم الوقت للتفكير في تدريسهم أيضًا .وتتعلق بعض التحديات الأخرى التي لوحظت في أثناء الدراسة بمديري المدارس ومعلمي المدرسة والمشرف على الطلاب .

الكلمات الدالة: التدريب العملي، معلم ما قبل الخدمة، ممارسة التدريس

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1.INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a difficult task for people who are starting to get into the teaching profession. Teachers need to go through a teaching practicum in order to obtain teaching experience (Yusof, 2020). Teacher mentoring is viewed as a tool to prepare pre-service teachers to learn and implement theories successfully with the help of a mentor teacher. This mentoring must be done "meaningfully, effectively, and systematically" (Yusof, 2020, p. 4-5).

According to Sarıcoban (2009), practicum studies are as important as the theoretical methodology courses for pre-service teachers. He believes that practical experience has always been a necessary part of foreign language teacher education. Pre-

service teachers usually first observe a teacher and then they start their own practical experience. Sarıcoban (2009) also suggests that the practicum program supplies pre-service teachers with adequate insight about teaching. Similarly, Ulla (2016) believes that practicum teaching is a requisite fragment of teacher education and a method that helps pre-service teachers apply the theories they have acquired in a real classroom setting.

The practicum program aids pre-service teachers experience the complex environment of the classroom under the supervision of mentors and teacher educators who observe the pre-service teacher (Starkey & Rawlins, 2012). An advantage of the practicum program is that it helps pre-service teachers acquire reflection skills as they observe the in-service teachers and experience the classroom environment themselves. Moreover, it plays an important role in aiding pre-service teachers in different ways, especially in developing themselves as reflective practitioners (Schön, 1987, as cited in Armutcu & Yaman, 2010). Armutcu and Yaman (2010) also propound that practicum is the crucial point of the four-year teacher education program because it helps pre-service teachers gain real classroom experience. Undeniably, the pre-service teacher will encounter the same problems in-service teachers encounter during their teaching, including unexpected and problematic situations.

Bala and Bala (2020) declare that practicum program, is critical for pre-service teachers before they start their careers. it is one of the most significant elements of the entire teacher education program. It is because of the practicum program that pre-service teachers get a chance to use their theoretical knowledge in a real classroom. They also include Vygotsky's view in their study and add that learners obtain cognitive development when they interact with people who are more knowledgeable than them and gain more skills and knowledge from them. The person with more experience will assess the learner and decide whether the learner is prepared to take on new tasks or not. Furthermore, practicum programs help pre-service teachers reach their full potential.

2. THEORITICAL BAUCKGROUND
2.1 PRACTICUM

Practicum can be referred to as both practice teaching and teaching practice and is defined as "opportunities provided for a student teacher to gain teaching experience, usually through working with an experienced teacher – the co-operating teacher – for a period of time by teaching that teacher's class." (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 589). Teaching practice is a time during which teachers in training are sent to schools to implement the knowledge and the pedagogy they have learned in their theoretical lessons in real classrooms. during this period, their performance will be evaluated and their mistakes will be corrected (Mungure, 2016).

Komba and Kira (2013) believe that teaching practice is the part of teacher training that is expected to help students become competent in the education sector. This preparation is done by offering them the expertise that is gained through planned programs for the sake of catering to the requirements of the field as well as the environment the pre-service teachers are being prepared for. As part of teacher preparation programs, practicum is crucial in enabling student teachers to obtain a set of teaching abilities that are intended to assist them become qualified teachers (Abbas, 2020).

2.1.1 THE ROLE OF PRACTICUM

The aim of practice teaching is to introduce pre-service teachers to the real-life teaching environment (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). According to Mutlu (2014), practicum is at the center of every teacher education program. She states that the quality of the practicum program should be improved so that the challenges that the new teachers face are eliminated. "Teacher education programmes are essential for the preparation of teachers to provide opportunities and challenges for the students to face the unknown future" (Bedir, 2019, p. 232). The purpose of practicum is to provide aspiring educators a chance to work on their ability to teach in a standard classroom setting (Hamad, 2023).

"Practicum courses are important for pre-service teachers to observe and practice the implementation of language teaching and learning theories in a real-classroom environment" (Uysal & Savas, 2021, p. 1678). Many pre-service teachers go into the practicum program with already existing perception of teaching that they have acquired during their theory lessons. However, the practicum program enables them to both gain more competence, and become enculturated into the teaching profession (Hammerness et al., 2005, as cited in Yuksel & Kavanoz, 2015). This transition into the profession is not always easy because of the clash between their past opinions and their present understanding (Yuksel & Kavanoz, 2015).

2.1.2 TYPES OF PRACTICUM

According to Hascher et al. (2007), two practicum settings are possible. The two settings are dependent on the pre-service teacher's role in the practicum. These two types of settings are practicum as apprenticeship and practicum as professional development. In practicum as an apprenticeship, the pre-service teacher looks up to the mentor teacher and tries to use the same pedagogical methods the mentor uses in their classroom, even though there is no assurance that the same methods will work for the pre-service teacher. The pre-service teacher is considered to have improved as long as they follow the steps of their mentor and there is no reflective feedback. In practicum as professional development, the mentor is only a part of the process and not a model that should be entirely copied. At the same time, mistakes are considered a part of professional development. The pre-service teacher will also pay attention to feedback and reflect on it.

2.2 PRE- SERVICE TEACHERS

Lourenço and Simões (2021) define pre-service teachers as student teachers who are studying at a higher education institution but do not have a teaching degree yet. Demetrius and Ricketts-Duncan (2022) believe that a pre-service teacher is someone "who is enrolled in a teacher education program before meeting the requirements for teacher certification" (p. 105). Allaire and Kamas (2021) also agree that a pre-service teacher is a student who studies in college in order to obtain a teacher certification.

2.3 SUPERVISORS AND THEIR ROLE IN PRACTICUM

A supervisor is a person that observes and assesses student-teachers' teaching (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). In the majority of practicum programs, university teachers do the job of monitoring the pre-service teachers, but the overall authority is given to the schools' mentor teachers (Hascher et al., 2007).

According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), a supervisor can function either as an appraiser or as an advisor or assistant. When the supervisor acts as an appraiser, the aim is to identify the gap between the pre-service teacher's teaching execution and exemplary

teaching behavior. When the supervisor acts as an advisor, the goal is to explore aspects of teaching that have been determined through negotiation and to encourage teacher self-development through reflection and self-observation (p. 574). Komba and Kira (2013) highlight that under ideal circumstances; the role of a supervisor is to aid the pre-service teacher in gaining the necessary skill set for teaching by advising, leading, as well as supporting them.

Gujjar et al. (2011) consider a supervisor's role in practice teaching as "a resource person, an adviser, a general moral booster, an interpreter of feedback, an assessor" (p. 305). They further explain that the supervisor is accountable for making all the stages of the practice teaching centered on the outcomes. The supervisor should also prepare everything in advance. They are required to arrange meetings with "teacher educators, experienced teachers of the institution, educationists, concerned school head teachers and other teachers" (p. 305). It is also the responsibility of the supervisor to oversee the pre-service teacher's classes and other assigned activities, and to give the pre-service teachers feedback so they can evaluate their own performance and make the appropriate adjustments.

2.4 SCHOOL PRINSIPLES AND THEIR ROLE IN PRACTICUM

Sharif (2020) believes that in order to manage a school, a principal is required to carry out a number of different tasks. A school principal's responsibilities include developing a mission and vision, implementing policies, budgeting, operating and managing the school, fostering community connections, communicating with staff and teachers, and ensuring ongoing professional development for them. However, the major role of the principal is to help improve teaching and learning.

According to Khan and Khan (2014), the principal performs a variety of duties, makes policy decisions, establishes rules and regulations, and uses a variety of strategies to provide a safe and effective environment for teaching-learning activities. They also sum up the main roles of a principal based on the principal's responsibilities and tasks as follows;

i. "As a Facilities/Resource Manager" (p. 928), a principal is in charge of allocating and making use of all available resources.

ii. "As a Trend Setter" (p. 928) a principal must set an example to encourage and receive involvement in collaborative efforts for the benefit of the institution.

iii. "As a Motivator" (p. 928), a principal is primarily responsible for implementing psychological and motivational strategies to actively participate in the current system in order to improve learning and teaching activities.

iv. "As a Head Teacher" (p. 928), a principal is the leader of the group due to being senior and more experienced. As a result of the teaching experience, the principal can offer invaluable insight into the teaching-learning environment and offer solutions if there are problems.

v. "As a Philosopher" (p. 929), a principal is a philosopher in the sense that "if one has no vision, philosophy, thought, ideology, one can't bring desirable changes in the educational system. In the same way, one can't make any contributions towards the betterment of a society" (p. 929).

vi. "As a Trainer / Professional Developer" (p. 929), a principal needs to share his/her experiences with the less experienced juniors in order to help them develop their abilities.

2.5 CHALLENGES FOUND IN PREVIOUS STUDIES

Mutlu puts forward some challenges facing pre-service teachers that other researchers have found in their studies. She claims that the challenges pre-service teachers faced were "being evaluated by the supervisor, managing class and enforcing discipline, managing time, and coping with the overall teaching workload" (Murray-Harvey et al., 2000, as cited in Mutlu, 2014, p. 1). Mutlu later adds that pre-service teachers "had difficulty experimenting innovative pedagogical practices they learned in their methodology courses, managing the class, and modifying their language according to the students' level" (Gan, 2013, as cited in Mutlu, 2014, p. 1). She continues by listing other challenges and proclaiming that "PTs had problems with students' discipline and motivation to learn language in addition to the challenge they experienced in choosing appropriate teaching methodology and strategy" (Yunus et al., 2010, as cited in Mutlu, 2014, p. 1).

Some other challenges can include; "mixed ability classes, the use of the mother tongue and students' expectations of teacher-centeredness" (Kabilan and Izzaham, 2008, as cited in Mutlu, 2014, p. 1). Yet other problems included the lack of communication between principals and pre-service teachers, which leads to the principals not seeming as helpful as the pre-service teachers expect them to be. Some pre-service teachers even reported that they felt the school was not involved in preparing the pre-service teachers as a whole, rather, only the mentors seemed to shoulder most of the responsibility (Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005, as cited in Mutlu, 2014, p. 1-2).

Pre-service teachers of English language whose first language is not English struggled with "explaining specific grammatical structures and unknown words, and modifying the language according to students' level" (Tüzel and Akcan, 2009, as cited in Mutlu, 2014, p. 2).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study attempts to pinpoint the most recent challenging aspects of the practicum program that pre-service teachers face during their senior year. Therefore, the study addresses the following research question:

What are the major challenges that pre-service teachers face during the period of their practicum program regarding:
   a) Teaching?
   b) The school administrators and teachers?
   c) The teaching material?
   d) The supervisor?
   e) The school students?

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the study were (107) fourth year students from three universities in the Kurdistan Region (University of Sulaimani, University of Halabja, and Tishk International University). Purposive sampling is employed to include only the universities that have senior year students who have finished their practice teaching. Additionally, only students who study in the Department of English are chosen to participate in completing the questionnaire.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

A quantitative method is used to obtain the data necessary to answer the research question; thus a questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. A questionnaire consisting of 21 Likert-scale items in the (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) categories was designed. After sending the research tool to a number of experts and consulting them to find its validity, the researcher changed the content and the wording of 5 items. The questionnaire was printed and given to the participants of the different universities by the researcher. A total of (107) students cooperated and agreed to answer all of the items.

3.4 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The tool used in this study was designed after carefully studying literature works related to the topic. Experts in the field examined the questionnaire after designing it. Their suggestions and comments were used to change and modify a number of items. Furthermore, the reliability of the study was determined via IBM SPSS 29.0.1.0.. It is worth mentioning that the reliability of the questionnaire is 0.75, which was measured using Cronbach's Alpha.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT Discussion

The research was undertaken through a quantitative method of analysis. The conducted questionnaire was analyzed, focusing on the frequency, percentage, and mode of the items, using IBM SPSS 29.0.1.0. The data was collected from KRI universities' senior students who had finished their practice teaching in either a public or a private school. As a result of analyzing the data, the most frequent challenges in each category will be shown.

4.1. CHALLENGES OF TEACHING

Managing the classroom can be challenging for some pre-service teachers. Out of 107 students who responded to item no.1, *I can manage the school students efficiently,* 28 (26.2%) students strongly agreed, and 60 (56.1%) students agreed that they can manage the school students efficiently. 8 (7.5%) students remained neutral, while 6 (5.6%) students disagreed, and only 5(4.7%) students strongly disagreed. According to this result, the majority of the students do not find managing the students a challenge, and only 10.3% of the students find it challenging to manage school students. As for item no.2, *I can use the allocated lesson time efficiently.* A similar result can be noticed. When it comes to using the allocated lesson time efficiently, 21 students strongly agreed, and 58 students agreed that they are capable of successfully using the allotted class time. This number makes up 73.8% of the respondents. 12 students disagreed, and 4 students strongly disagreed with this item. On the other hand, 12 students remained neutral about the item. This result shows that only 14.9% of the students have difficulty using the timeframe allocated for the lesson.

When it comes to item no. 3, *I can prepare the activities related to the topic of the lesson,* 14 students strongly agreed and 26 students agreed that they are able to develop activities that are linked to the topic of the lesson. On the other hand, 9 students disagreed and 4 students strongly disagreed with the item. Most importantly, 54 students, which make up more than half of the students, cannot decide whether they can prepare lesson-related activities or not. The results of item no. 4, *I can prepare quiz questions;* shows that 84 out of 107 respondents, which makes up 78.5% of the students, are able to create quiz questions. However, 14% of the participants cannot prepare quiz questions; 12 of

which disagreed with the statement and 2 students strongly disagreed. Only 8 students (7.5%) showed neutrality towards this item. The result reveals that the majority of ELT pre-service teachers that participated in the study face no trouble when preparing quiz questions.

Preparing a good lesson plan is an important part of delivering a well-organized lesson. Graduates of the department of ELT are expected to be able to create lesson plans. In response to item no. 5, *I can prepare the lesson plan,* 4 students strongly disagreed. Similarly, 8 more students disagreed with the item, meaning that 11.2% of the participants are not capable of preparing the lesson plan for their class. 8 of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Nevertheless, 59 students strongly agreed, and 28 students agreed that they could prepare the lesson plan. The sum of the participants who have no problem preparing the lesson plan makes up 81.3% of the respondents. The results mentioned above disclose that item no. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are not challenges that pre-service teachers face during their practice teaching.

Pre-service teachers need to reflect on their own teaching in order to find their shortcomings and improve their teaching. Item no. 6, *I have time to reflect on my own teaching,* is designed to understand whether pre-service teachers have enough time to reflect on their own teaching or not. It is worth mentioning that 18 (i.e., 16.8%) students were indecisive towards this item. 9 students strongly agreed and 13 students agreed. In total, only 22 (i.e., 20.5%) participants have enough time to reflect on their teaching. In contrast, 51 students disagreed and 16 students strongly disagreed with the statement. In other words, 62.7% of the participants are unable to find time to reflect on their own teaching. The reported result conveys that the mentioned item can be regarded as a challenge for ELT pre-service teachers. Subsequently, Item no. 20, *The practicum program period is long enough to give me real teaching experience,* is constructed because the researcher wants to find out whether or not pre-service teachers think the practice teaching period is long enough to give them teaching experience that is adequate for them or not. 10 students strongly agreed, and 25 students agreed with the item. 10 more students choose to stay neutral. On the other hand, 27 students disagreed, and 35 students strongly disagreed with the item. To put it simply, while 32.7% of the participants confirm that the practice teaching period is long enough to give them real teaching experience, 57.9% of the participant claim the exact opposite. The obtained outcome proves that item no. 20 is a challenge. Table 1 shows the frequency, percentage, and the mode of item 1,2,3,4,5,6, and 20.

Table 1: Frequency, percentage, and mode of item no. 1,2,3,4,5,6, and 20.

Items	Options										Mode
	SA		A		N		D		SD		
	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	
1.	28	26.2	60	56.1	8	7.5	6	5.6	5	4.7	A
2.	21	19.6	58	54.2	12	11.2	12	11.2	4	3.7	A
3.	14	13.1	26	24.3	54	50.5	9	8.4	4	3.7	N
4.	35	32.7	49	45.8	8	7.5	12	11.2	2	2.8	A
5.	59	55.1	28	26.2	8	7.5	8	7.5	4	3.7	SA

6.	9	8.4	13	12.1	18	16.8	51	47.7	16	15.0	D
20.	10	9.3	25	23.4	10	9.3	27	25.2	35	32.7	SD
* SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, FRQ= Frequency, PRC= Percentage											

4.2 CHALLENGES FOR THE SCHOOL ADMINSTRAITOR AND THE SCHOOL TEACHER

The upcoming items of the questionnaire are designed to investigate the challenges pre-service teachers face as the school administrators and teachers. Pre-service teachers need a welcoming environment to show their full teaching potential. Item no. 7, *Everything goes smoothly with the school administrator,* is designed to find out whether the school administrator is creating obstacles or not. 7.5% of the participants strongly agreed, 26.2% agreed, 12.1% disagreed, and 1.9% strongly disagreed with this item. It is essential to add that 52.3% of the participants, or the majority, are unsure and maintain neutrality.

One of the duties of the school principals during practice teaching period is to evaluate the pre-service teachers out of 10. The principal's evaluation cannot be accurate if they do not monitor and observe the pre-service teachers' lesson. Item no. 8, *The principal monitors my class in order to evaluate my teaching,* is designed to indicate whether principals observe the pre-service teacher or not. 10.3% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the item. 13.1% strongly agreed, and 20.6% agreed with the principal observing their classroom in order to evaluate their teaching performance. On the other hand, 14.0% disagreed and 42.1% strongly disagreed with the statement. This result is an evidence that this item is a challenge. It also raises concern about the method the principals use to evaluate the pre-service teachers when 56.1% of the participants claim that their school principal has never entered their lessons with the intent of observing.

Item no. 9, *The principal listens to my concerns*, reveals that 24 students strongly agreed and 49 students agreed that their school principal listens to their concerns. 9 students were uncertain. 19 students disagreed and only 6 students strongly disagreed that their principal didn't pay attention to the concerns they had. The result indicated that 68.2% of the respondents had a principal who listened to their concerns; therefore, this item is not a challenge. The mentor teacher is considered to be the role model for the pre-service teachers. Their duty is to observe, guide and correct the pre-service teacher during their time at school. Regarding item no. 12, The *mentor teacher gives me feedback and oversees my activities,* 24 participants strongly agreed, and 7 people agreed with the statement. 12 participants were indecisive and remained neutral. Opposed to them, 45 participants disagreed and 19 more participants strongly disagreed with the statement. In other words, while 28.9% of the respondents got feedback from their mentor teachers, 59.9% of the respondents didn't. this result proves that item no. 12 is a challenge for pre-service teachers.

Sometimes school teachers tend to explain the lesson and give instructions to the students in L1 instead of L2. Item no. 21 is designed to pinpoint whether the pre-service teachers' mentor teacher uses L1 or L2. In item no. 21, *The school teacher uses L1 instead of L2*, the majority of the respondents affirm that their mentor teacher speaks L1. 28 respondents strongly agreed with the item. Likewise, 34 respondents agreed. 15

respondents were uncertain. 16 respondents disagreed, and only 14 respondents strongly disagreed. The results show that 58% of the participants claim that the school teacher uses L1 in the classroom, which makes this item a challenge. Table 2 shows the frequency, percentage and mode of item 7,8,9,12, and 21.

Table 2: Frequency, percentage, and mode of item no. 7,8,9,12, and 21.

Items	Options										Mode
	SA		A		N		D		SD		
	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	
7.	8	7.5	28	26.2	56	52.3	13	12.1	2	1.9	N
8.	14	13.1	22	20.6	11	10.3	15	14.0	45	42.1	SD
9.	24	22.4	49	45.8	9	8.4	19	17.8	6	5.6	A
12.	24	22.4	7	6.5	12	11.2	45	42.1	19	17.8	D
21.	28	26.2	34	31.8	15	14.0	16	15.0	14	13.1	A

* SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, FRQ= Frequency, PRC= Percentage

4.3 CHALLENGES OF THE TEACHING MATERIALS

There is no doubt that pre-service teachers need to have the school textbooks in order to teach the lesson like the school teacher. the responsibility of providing the necessary books falls on the school. In regards to item no.10, *The school provides me with the necessary program/ textbooks,* 72 students confirmed that textbooks were provided by the school. There were 29 students who strongly agreed and 44 students who agreed. Moreover, if the 10 students who stayed unbiased are excluded, only 24 students declared that the schools they taught at didn't give them textbooks. Among these 24 students, 16 students disagreed and 8 students strongly disagreed. Based on the results exhibited, only 22.5% of the students alleged they were not provided textbooks. This being the case, item no.10 is not considered a challenge.

Extra teaching tools help the pre-service teacher display their full set of skills in the classroom in addition to potentially helping them make the lesson more engaging for the school students. The purpose of item no.11, *The school provides me with extra tools (markers, flashcards, projectors, printers, etc.),* is to determine how many pre-service teachers are equipped with tools that assists their teaching. 34 participants strongly agreed, and 37 participants agreed with the item. 9 participants remained unsettled about the item. 14 participants disagreed and 13 participants strongly disagreed with the item. The results indicate that 66.4% of the respondents, which is the majority, were supplied with extra tools as opposed to the 25.2% who were left without supplies. The data observed proves that neither item no.10, nor item no.11 is garded as a challenge as it can be showcased in table 3.

Table 3: Frequency, percentage, and mode of question 10, and 11.

Items	Options										Mode
	SA		A		N		D		SD		
	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	

10.	29	27.1	44	41.1	10	9.3	16	15.0	8	7.5	A
11.	34	31.8	37	34.6	9	8.4	14	13.1	13	12.1	A

* SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, FRQ= Frequency, PRC= Percentage

4.4 CHALLENGES OF THE SUPERVISORS

The supervisors assess the pre-service teachers based on their teaching performance. It is impossible for supervisors to evaluate the pre-service teachers without visiting and observing them. According to the results of item no.13, *The supervisor visits me regularly,* 11 participants strongly agreed, and 27 agreed that their supervisor visits them regularly. 53 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 10 respondents disagreed, and 6 strongly disagreed. While item no.13 cannot be regarded as a challenge because only 14.9% of the participants confirm that their supervisor didn't visit them regularly, it cannot be completely dismissed either because the majority (i.e., 49.5%) have stayed neutral instead of claiming the opposite.

Asking the pre-service teachers about how their experience goes at school can help the supervisors find out any problem the pre-service teacher may be facing at school, as well as assist them in overcoming the problems. The responses to item no.14, *The supervisor asks me to provide feedback about my experience in school,* disclose that 19 students strongly agreed and 12 students agreed that the supervisor asks them to provide feedback about their experience at school. Another 12 students were unsure. On the contrary 14 students disagreed and 49 students strongly disagreed. To put it simply, 59.8% of the respondents affirmed that their supervisor didn't ask them to provide feedback about their experience at school. As a result, it is important to mention that item no.14 poses a challenge.

One of the roles of the supervisor is to give pre-service teachers feedback about their teaching performance so that the pre-service teacher becomes better at teaching. item no.15, *The supervisor gives me feedback after visiting me,* displays that 43 students strongly agreed, and 40 students agreed that their supervisor gives them feedback after observing their lesson. In contrast, 11 students disagreed, and 7 students strongly disagreed with the item. the number of the students who couldn't decide were only 6. In other words, the majority (i.e., 77.6%) of the respondents declare that their supervisor gives them feedback. Based on the data obtained, item no.15 does not pose a challenge for the pre-service teachers.

In item no.16, *The supervisor has contact with the mentor teacher to make my experience smoother*, more than half of the students report that there was no contact between their supervisor and their mentor teacher. the statistics reveal that 8 students strongly agreed, 27 students agreed, 13 students remain unsure, 37 students disagreed, and 22 students strongly disagreed with the item. Depending on the gathered information, 32.7% of the pre-service teachers believe their supervisor has contact with their mentor teacher. On the other hand, 55.2% of the pre-service teachers state the opposite, making this item a challenge.

Pre-service teachers' teaching performance is evaluated during the last weeks of the practice teaching. It is essential for them to know what aspects of their teaching will

be evaluated in order for them to focus more on those aspects and improve their teaching by the time the supervisor comes and evaluates them. The goal of item no.17, *the supervisor gave the evaluation criteria at the beginning of the practice teaching,* is to investigate whether the pre-service teachers are aware of the evaluation criteria or not. 15 students strongly agreed that they were given the evaluation criteria, 23 students agreed, 14 students neither agreed nor disagreed, 33 students disagreed, and 22 students strongly disagreed. More than half of the students disagreed with the item. This reflects that item no. 17 is a challenge. Table 4 shows the frequency, percentage, and the mode of item 13,14,15,16, and 17.

Table 4: Frequency, percentage, and mode of item 13,14,15,16, and 17.

Items	Options										Mode
	SA		A		N		D		SD		
	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	
13.	11	10.3	27	25.2	53	49.5	10	9.3	6	5.6	N
14.	19	17.8	12	11.2	12	11.2	15	14.0	49	45.8	SD
15.	43	40.2	40	37.4	6	5.6	11	10.3	7	6.5	SA
16.	8	7.5	27	25.2	13	12.1	37	34.6	22	20.6	D
17.	15	14.0	23	21.5	14	13.1	33	30.8	22	20.6	D

* SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, FR= Frequency, PRC= Percentage

4.5 CHALLENGES OF THE SCHOOL STUDENTS

In item18, *the school students are willing to participate in the classroom*, most of the respondents (72%) verify that the students do participate in the classroom. 37 of these respondents strongly agreed, and 40 of them agreed to the statement. Nevertheless, 15.9% of the respondents claimed the opposite and 12.1% remained unsure. Concerning item no.19, *the school students are motivated to learn English*, 26 participants strongly agreed, and 35 participants agreed to the item. on the contrary, 28 participants disagreed, and 12 participants strongly disagreed. Only 6 participants showed neutrality. The results show that 57% of the participants attest to the fact that school students are motivated to learn English. Depending on the outcome derived from the data, the two items mentioned above are not regarded as challenges that pre-service teachers face as it can be seen in table 5.

Table 5: Frequency, percentage, and mode of item 18 and 19.

Items	Options										Mode
	SA		A		N		D		SD		
	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	FRQ	PRC	
18.	37	34.6	40	37.4	13	12.1	11	10.3	6	5.6	A
19.	26	24.3	35	32.7	6	5.6	28	26.2	12	11.2	A

*SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, FRQ= Frequency, PRC= Percentage

5. CONCLUSIONS

The main reason for conducting this study was to find out more about the problems that pre-service teachers face during their practice teaching. 21 items relating to the most common challenges of the practicum program were prepared by the researcher. The (107) respondents who participated in the study helped the researcher identify the main challenges regarding each aspect of practice teaching. In regards to the challenges of teaching, the researcher found out that pre-service teachers do not have time to reflect on their own teaching. Furthermore, they admit that the practicum program period is not long enough to give them real teaching experience.

The results show that out of the five items related to school administrators and teachers, three of them caused difficulty for the pre-service teachers. Most of the respondents claimed that the school principal never observed their lesson with the intention of grading them. They also declared that the mentor teacher did not give them feedback. Another problem mentioned was the use of L1 by the school teacher inside the classroom instead of L2.

The challenges the pre-service teachers faced in connection with their supervisor included, the supervisor not asking the pre-service teachers about their practice teaching experience, and the supervisor not having contact with the school of the practice teaching. The respondents also proclaimed that they were not given the evaluation criteria at the beginning of the program.

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