



UTM
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School of Education,
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and Humanities

Assignment:	Proposal
Title:	UTM English Language Teacher-Trainees' Teaching Practicum Experiences: Challenges and Attainments

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TABLE OF CONTENT

	Pages
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	2
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions	4
1.4 Scope and Limitations of Study	5
1.5 Significance of Study	6
1.6 Operational Definition	7
1.7 Study Approach and Design	8
1.8 Study Instrument	9
2.0 Design and Methodology	10
2.1 Population and Study Sample	10
2.2 Data Analysis Proposal	11
2.3 Expected Findings of the Study	12
2.4 Cost Estimates	12
References	13

1.0 Introduction

Generally, practicum experiences in the classroom have played a significant role in all teacher preparation programmes. Since student teachers are likely to participate in reciprocal interaction with learners in actual classrooms during practicum phase, this is a road toward more complex forms of teaching thinking with the purpose of better enabling them to cope with future classroom realities. A teaching practicum, as stated by Koross (2016), allows future educators to put their knowledge of learning theory into practise before joining the field. The term "practise teaching" connotes three main ideas: the opportunity for students to put into practise what they will learn in the classroom, the breadth of experiences they will have in schools, and the emphasis on application rather than analysis. All of a future teacher's experiences in the classroom will be referred to as "teaching practise" henceforth (Gujjar et al., 2011).

A successful and effective teaching practicum is the benchmark of the quality of a teacher-training programme (Haigh et al., 2013). While it is commonly understood that academic knowledge is important in teacher education, it has never been deemed sufficient without physical and real teaching experience. Theoretical training is important, but pre-service teachers need help putting it into practise in the real world. According to Zeichner (2010), a well-designed teaching practicum is necessary to guarantee that institutions of higher education and teacher training produce high-quality instructors. Teaching practicum, as defined by Khanam (2015), is the time frame in which future educators get actual classroom experience. It's an opportunity for aspiring educators to hone their craft in a genuine classroom setting with the guidance of an experienced educator (Azeem, 2011).

The global economy and the competitive English education market are only two of the many obstacles that teachers, and particularly teachers of EFL, may anticipate encountering in their careers (Deocampo, 2020). English language teachers should have the same training in

order to be effective in this sector. To equip students with chances for lifetime learning, English language teachers must continuously enhance their competence. As such, it is crucial that educators refresh their memories on the basics of teaching in order to become effective educators. Reflection on one's own teaching practise may be a convoluted affair due to the interconnected nature of introducing new ideas, learning new material, and analysing one's own teaching practise. Evaluation of a teacher-in-training based on their capability as an English language teacher is one scenario in which an analysis of teaching performance attributes may be useful. In addition to learning as students, teacher-in-trainings acquire experience as they explore the benefits and drawbacks of being a classroom instructor. Both teachers' and students' learning may benefit from this strategy.

This study reports challenges faced by the UTM TESL undergraduate students during their teaching practicum and explores the accomplishments that they have attained throughout the course.

1.1 Background of the Study

Practicum in teaching, also known as Latihan Mengajar (LM) in Malaysia, is a required course for those majoring in education at a university or college. Undergraduates studying TESL at UTM's School of Education (SoE) are required to participate in a teaching practicum to get hands-on experience in the classroom. Students are expected to have completed the required prerequisite theoretical courses before enrolling in this course, which is typically given in the second semester of the third year. The LM or field practise typically lasts for one semester, during which students spend four months in a school teaching an actual classroom. In a school setting, student teachers will have a mentor teacher or supervising teacher with whom they will work closely throughout their practicum. The student teachers will also have a professor appointed by the university or institution from which they graduated to serve as a

supervisor, but this person's responsibilities will often be less extensive than those of the school's mentor.

The benefits of practical education have been recognised by several specialists. As mentioned by Hobson et al. (2006), for example, student teachers benefit from school-based practicum since it allows them to observe in real classrooms and gives them practise responding to different situations. In addition, student teachers' field experiences in schools will provide them a chance to put their knowledge to use using specific strategies (Rosaen & Florio- Ruane, 2008 in Grossman et al, 2009). Academic courses cannot equal the practical experience of teaching, and there are numerous situations in teaching for which instructors are typically not prepared by coursework, say Richards & Farrell (2011). This course will not equip you for "managing a disruptive student," "changing a lesson in response to a learner's issues," or "revamping a teacher-led grammar practise session [...] to change it into a group assignment." This is supported by a number of studies (Senior, 2006; Farrell, 2007; Richard & Farrell, 2011) Thus, future instructors need to be ready to use sound discretion in the classroom.

As prospective English instructors, TESL students at UTM must experience the advantages of teaching practicum. The practicum experience may impact the students' desire to continue their studies and pursue their profession in teaching (Spooner-Lane et al, 2009). Besides, little research has been done about "Issues and Concerns Faced By Undergraduate Language Student Teachers during Teaching Practicum Experiences" from the Education Department Faculty of Universiti Malaya. Therefore, to investigate further the issues pertaining to the student teachers' experience in teaching English, I conducted this research.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

On a worldwide scale, several research have been undertaken on different aspects of teaching practicum. Several qualitative research on ESL or EFL practicum experiences using narrative inquiry as the data-gathering method have been undertaken. Numrich (1996) presented the findings of a secondary analysis of 26 diary studies by rookie ESL instructors enrolled in a preservice practicum course as part of an American TESOL master's degree programme. Participants in this research were novice ESL instructors with fewer than two years of experience in the profession. Time management, delivering clear instructions, reacting to learners' diverse learning essentials, grammar knowledge, and measuring their progress was the student instructors' most often reported complaints in their journals. Payant and Murphy (2012) performed another research on the duties and roles recognised by working together among instructors at American universities. Because of the challenges within communication between supervisors and teacher trainees and a lack of clarity on the mentors' duties, the practicum process was significantly impacted, according to the researchers.

The teaching practicum is a more rigorous elements of the teacher education curriculum for future teachers. Its difficulties have substantial consequences on the teaching profession. As teaching relies significantly on in-field experiences, it's important to recognise the barriers teacher-trainees encounter throughout their internship and assist them to convert from student to teacher in a real working environment. Hence, this study comes to find out the challenges facing practicum students of UTM TESL undergraduates through the contexts of classroom management, the language barrier in communication and instruction, and the planning of lessons.

1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The study is intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the specific challenges faced by UTM TESL undergraduate students during the teaching practicum?
 - The first research question is specifically to identify what are the hindrances that UTM TESL undergraduate students may face during their teaching practicum. This is a pivotal part of the study that the researcher needs to identify. Some of the potential hindrances could be pertaining to insufficient mentoring support, the application of particular pedagogical orientations in the classroom settings or the school's and teacher's workload. Identifying the challenges, the researcher believes that it can lead to structuring such effective strategies to overcome the challenges and at the same time foster essential skills.
2. What are the accomplishments of UTM TESL undergraduate students attained throughout their practicum?
 - The second question is to explore what UTM TESL undergraduate students have learned and accomplished throughout their teaching practicum. Exploring the learning outcomes or achievements of the course can highlight researcher if the teacher trainees have the ability to apply the necessary knowledge, theories and practice in the real classroom setting to combat the challenges they face. The types of attainments or accomplishments can be varied, for example, able to develop professional identity, develop pedagogical strategies, and develop positive feelings.

The objectives of the study are to

1. identify the specific challenges faced by UTM TESL undergraduate students during the teaching practicum.

2. explore the accomplishments of UTM TESL undergraduate students attained throughout their practicum.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of Study

According to Chetty (2020) the scope of the study refers to the aspects that a research project will include. It specifies the limits of the investigation. The scope of a research is always determined in the first phases. Choosing it at a later stage provides considerable uncertainty about the study objectives. The primary function of the study's scope is to define the degree to which the research field will be studied and, therefore, the parameters that will be monitored. In other words, it allows the researcher to decide what will be included in the study and what will not. Defining the scope enables the researcher to develop superior research and writing skills.

Meanwhile, a study's limits are its defects or weaknesses. Constraints on the research design, methods, and materials, as well as other variables, may influence the conclusions of your study. Nonetheless, some researchers have second thoughts and are not confident about presenting the limitation of the work in their publications as doing so may damage the acceptability and credibility of their work in the eyes of readers and reviewers (Wordvice, 2022).

This study focused on the challenges faced by TESL undergraduates throughout their teaching practice. The respondents of the study are composed of 20 randomly selected TESL students from the School of Education who have undergone their teaching practicum during the second semester of their third year. Furthermore, this research would have its limitations; one is the subject participants consisted of only 20 students, whereas larger sample sizes would allow for more robust conclusions to be drawn from studies.

1.5 Significance of Study

A study's significance refers to the study's contribution(s) and influence on a scientific area. The relevance also indicates who and how the study results benefit.

The significance of the search is based on the nature of the topic presented about practicum barriers and the category that suffers from the presence of these obstacles, the instructor. A student teacher is concerned with the education process; thus, their perspective is essential to the practicum programme. And possibly, the findings give real proof to those connected with this programme in the faculties of education for suitable solutions for students and the growth of the programme to restrict and lessen the students' suffering. Additionally, it may assist educators in being accountable for teacher preparation prior to their service.

The findings of this research may aid practicum stakeholders by giving concrete data on the present practises and issues of the practicum encountered by teacher trainees and by offering different scenarios for future TESL students to prepare for their own teaching practicum. Additionally, learning from the participants' practicum experiences, future educators are better equipped to overcome their initial fears and apprehensions about the profession.

1.6 Operational Definition

- a. Attainment** The action or event of obtaining a goal towards which one has strived.

- b. Challenges** A person or thing that makes it more difficult for somebody to do something or for something to happen

- c. Experience** The understanding and expertise that you have acquired as a result of doing something for an extended length of time; the method through which you obtained this.

- d. Teacher-trainee** Someone who's training to become a teacher with support from a teacher training provider

- e. Teaching practicum** A precursor to student teaching, a staple component to graduate education programs.

- f. Practicum** A course at the undergraduate or graduate level, often in a specialised area of study, aimed to provide students supervised experience in applying a previously or simultaneously studied topic or theory.

1.7 Study Approach and Design

The study is going to be conducted by adopting a qualitative approach to investigate the challenges faced by the final-year of UTM TESL undergraduates. Furthermore, the design of this study is phenomenological research design as it tends to answer the research questions which are

1. what are the specific challenges faced by UTM TESL undergraduate students during the teaching practicum?
2. what are the accomplishments of UTM TESL undergraduate students attained throughout their practicum?

Ahmed (2017) argues that qualitative research may be utilised to understand and value the significance that different people and communities place on a given social or human issue. For this reason, we are using a qualitative strategy. The research process includes the following elements: the emergence of questions and processes, the collection of data in the context of the participant, the inductive development of themes from specifics, and the researcher's interpretation of the importance of the data. The format of the completed written report may be altered to suit your needs. People who take part in this form of research are inclined to embrace a point of view towards research that respects an inductive method, places a focus on individual meaning, and recognises the value of accurately expressing the complexity of a situation.

In addition, Delve and Limpaecher, (2022) have said that the phenomenological design requires the researcher to cast away any a priori preconceptions about the event or experience that is being studied. Researchers use phenomenological research designs in order to appreciate the universal nature of a phenomenon. This is accomplished through researching the points of view of persons who have encountered the event in question. To begin, it has a descriptive quality. The goal of the researcher is to provide a description of the structure of the phenomena that is as accurate as possible. Second, the qualitative phenomenological research technique tries to figure out what a particular event means to a group of people and how those people felt about it.

1.8 Study Instrument

This study opts for two instruments which are semi-structured surveys and reflective journals. According to Janesick (1999, as cited in Bashan, B., & Holsblat, R., 2017), reflective journals are one of the tools to collect data in qualitative research, particularly in the behavioural sciences, and are seen as an efficient approach to gathering information on an individual's emotions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, as cited in Bashan, B., & Holsblat,

R., 2017). The diary entries contain process data (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, as cited in Bashan, B., & Holsblat, R., 2017). They demonstrate what happens throughout the execution of a programme or change and how participants perceive these happenings. These data also help researchers to assess the process's or alteration's impact or success.

The semi-structured survey will be held through an online platform on Google Forms and will disseminate to the intended participants. The survey relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework. The survey can assist to find the answer to the specific challenges faced by UTM TESL undergraduate students during the teaching practicum. The questionnaires may contain 6 questions for each theme. Meanwhile, the reflective journal will be retrieved from the participants as everyone who has done the teaching practicum is required to write a reflective paper on their experiences and learning outcomes from the course. This is to answer the second question which is what accomplishments they attained throughout their practicum.

2.0 Design and Methodology

This study is going to be a descriptive phenomenological study to identify challenges faced by the UTM TESL undergraduate students during their teaching practicum and explore the accomplishments that they have attained throughout the course. The methodology of this study will be adopting a qualitative approach in which the instruments involved are semi-structured questionnaires and journal articles that will be given to 20 final-year TESL students that are selected through purposive sampling.

2.1 Population and Study Sample

The research population of this study consisted of all final-year UTM TESL undergraduates at the University of Technology Malaysia (UTM) who had finished their teaching practicum during the second semester of their previous academic year. The total number of final-year TESL students is 74. In many types of study, involving the entire population would be optimal, but in most circumstances, it is not practical to include all subjects since the population is almost finite (Ilker et al., 2016). Therefore, this study will choose to use purposive sampling.

According to McCombes (2019), judgement sampling demands the researcher to apply their skills and experience to identify a sample that will benefit the study goals. In other words, the researcher must use their knowledge and experience to make a decision about which sample to select. When the intended population being investigated is small and specific, or when the researcher is looking for in-depth knowledge on a phenomenon rather than statistical assessments, these are both common situations in which qualitative research is useful and appropriate for this study. In addition, for the purposes of this research, it is essential to have certain individuals who have already participated in a teaching practicum. These participants are senior TESL students at UTM. Additionally, purposive sampling is one of the most efficient approaches in terms of both time and money among the current sample methods (Research-Methodology, 2012)

2.2 Data Analysis Proposal

At the conclusion of the class, all of the forms and reflective journals will be compiled and manually analysed using "Thematic Content Analysis." This method was defined as "the act of working with raw data to find and explain essential concepts or themes" (Matthews & Ross, 2010, as cited in Koksal & Genc, 2019). The results of this analysis will be presented in

a report that will be made available to the students. The data collected from the reflective diaries and questionnaire answers of each participant will be considered as a whole in order to identify themes that are analogous or connected to one another. After going over all of the data twice, the researcher prepared a list of codes to use as the basis for the different categories of themes. The research questions suggest that these codes are what are used to develop the overarching themes. The themes and codes were disclosed via the student teachers' semi-structured questionnaire forms as well as their personal diaries.

2.3 Expected Findings of the Study

The expected findings of the study are based on the students' reflective journals and answers to the questionnaires align with the research questions.

1. What are the specific challenges faced by UTM TESL undergraduate students during the teaching practicum?

The expected findings from this question can be sorted out into four themes

- Concerning the administration of classes, student instructors often face difficult situations.
- The difficulties that student instructors have in terms of managing their time
- The difficulties that student instructors have in connection to classrooms with students of varying abilities
- The problems that student instructors have in making effective use of technology are among the challenges they face.

2. What are the accomplishments of UTM TESL undergraduate students attained throughout their practicum?

The expected findings from this question can be sorted out into three themes

- the attainments of student teachers in respect to various educational methodologies
- the accomplishments of student teachers in connection to the formation of their professional identities
- fostering positive emotions and attitudes

2.4 Cost Estimates

This study has not required any cost.

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