

THE VALUE OF TEACHING PRACTICUM

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Abstract:

The significant role of teachers to the success of any educational reform is undeniable (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1998, cited in Tuli & File, 2009) in the sense that they can help bringing about changes in the society. This was well-addressed a long time ago by Ho Chi Minh (1958) as “*For one year’s benefit, plant trees. For 100 years’ benefit, grow humans*”. An effective teacher training program, therefore, contributes a great deal to the high quality of any education system. As for pre-service teacher training, there are several suggested models of professional education, such as “*the craft model*”, “*the applied science model*” and “*the reflective model*” (Wallace, 1991, p.6), to name but a few. Although there are certain differences among these models, they all share a common stage – Teaching Practice. Among different ways of organizing teaching practice, apprenticeship, also known as teaching practicum, is a significant aspect since it provides pre-service teachers with practical experience of how the real teaching job actually goes on (Slick, 1998, cited in Gan, 2013).

Teaching practicum is an essential component in the teacher education program of University of Languages and International Studies – Vietnam National University (ULIS - VNU). This multiple-case study aims to seek evidences of the value of teaching practicum as perceived by pre-service teachers of English in two aspects: (1) developing teaching competence and (2) promoting professional working skills. By investigating their six-week teaching practicum experience in a high school in Hanoi, the study reveals that trainees learn a lot of skills to survive their future teaching career. It also shows how they struggle to translate theories of teaching learnt at university into practical teaching techniques in the high school context.

The researchers hope to contribute insights of how an essential component of a teacher education program is being conducted from the perspective of those who are directly involved. Findings from this research suggests certain adaptations to be made to current teaching practicum instructions by the University so that pre-service teachers' experience of the apprenticeship period can be enhanced.

Key terms: *teaching practicum, professional development, disciplines, teacher trainees (also student teachers, or trainees, pre-service teachers), mentors.*

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The understanding of the function that education has to the society and to the country has requested education reform at all levels. The significant role of teachers to the success of any educational reform is undeniable (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1998, cited in Tuli & File, 2009) in the sense that they can help bringing about changes in the society. This was well-addressed a long time ago by Ho Chi Minh (1958) as “*For one year’s benefit, plant trees. For 100 years’ benefit, grow humans*”. In the same line, UNESCO – IBE (2004) specified that teachers are guiders who lead students to explore the knowledge space and support them in achieving information and making effective communication possible. No wonder why Muhamad (2006, cited in Tuli & File, 2009) emphasized the quality of teachers as a decisive factor for education of the highest quality.

Together with curriculum being redesigned and new textbooks being applied, more attention is being paid to teacher education programs. As for pre-service teacher training, there are several suggested models of professional education, such as “*the craft model*”, “*the applied science model*” and “*the reflective model*” (Wallace, 1991, p.6), to name but a few. Although there are certain differences among these models, they all share a common stage – Teaching Practice. Among different ways of organizing teaching practice, apprenticeship, also known as teaching practicum, is a significant aspect since it provides pre-service teachers with practical experience of how the real teaching job actually goes on (Slick, 1998, cited in Gan, 2013). In other words, “*practicum plays a major role in helping student teachers bridge the theory and practice gap and develop their personal teaching competence*” (<http://www.nie.edu.sg/practicum/practicum-structure>).

In most teacher training institutes, apprenticeship has been an integral period in learning to be a teacher. Both University of Manitoba, Canada and National Institute of Education, Singapore, requests their students to complete compulsory teaching practicum of 12 or 10 weeks at a certain partner school of the institutes under the supervision of a Faculty Advisor. Meanwhile, the teaching practicum in the University of Calgary, Canada performs on a first-come-first-serve basis with restricted apprenticing posts available to early registration. In the context of ULIS, students are required to take a 6-week teaching practicum module. Students may choose either to join a group of teacher trainees to a host school pre-assigned by ULIS or to complete a stand-alone practicum. Statements by all universities emphasize the essentiality of teaching practicum as an opportunity for teacher trainees to become involved with, and actively participate in all aspects of the school’s activities. Through these experiences, they will learn to link theory and practice, and

to acquire the understanding and skills necessary for teaching effectively in a range of classroom situations.

Important as it is, the number of studies investigating the reality of teacher trainees' teaching practicum is modest (Farrell, 2003; Hang Nguyen, 2009). This study is conducted partly to address this gap in teacher education research.

As lecturers at FELTE, Division of English Language Teaching Methodology, the researchers have got 3 years' experience in coaching pre-service teachers. They are highly aware of the essential role that teaching practicum plays in orientating students to their future teaching career. This academic year, they had a chance to take students to a high school to do their internship. By observing students conducting their tasks in that high school context and listening to their experience sharing during weekly group meetings, they were able to understand the difficulties that the trainees encountered as well as the fruitful results that they gained during their practicum. Being insiders has partly encouraged the researchers to carry out this study to clarify the value of teaching practicum from student trainees' perspective.

Research questions

This research provides quantitative and qualitative data of the 6-week teaching practicum experience in a high school of 41 pre-service teacher trainees of English. It was conducted with the aim of seeking answers to the following research questions.

RQ1: *What are the pedagogical skills that teacher trainees practised in teaching practicum from the surveyed trainees' perspective?*

RQ2: *What are the professional working skills that this group of teacher trainees acquired through their teaching practicum?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gower, Phillips and Walters (2005, p.1) also remark the four areas that teaching practice normally focuses on, which are:

1. sensitivity to problems of language use for learners;
2. sensitivity to how learners learn, the skills they need, the strategies they employ, and the problems they have;
3. classroom management skills; and
4. teaching techniques.

(Gower, Phillips and Walters, 2005, p.1)

Features of a teaching practicum

Teaching practicum is described to occur within a specific block of time with trainees experiencing the art of teaching in real school context (Zeichner, 1996). They are assigned to one mentoring teacher and specific classes for teaching practice at a host school. During the practicum they “*observe the teacher teaching the students and then teach part or all of some of the lessons*” and are “*guided by and observed by the group’s teacher or by another person acting as teaching practice tutor or supervisor*” (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005). This description outlines the following characteristics of a practicum: (1) the teaching practice may be carried out in another place, but not the trainees’ school; (2) there must be a teacher of the local host institution mentoring and supervising the trainees on their teaching; (3) the teaching of trainees must be done on a specific group of learners in real context and observed; and (4) there should be a team to help trainees, members of which are the teacher and a tutor or supervisor from the training institute that sends the trainees to take their apprenticeship at the local host school.

The abovementioned description goes in line with four out of the five main features of a TESOL practicum remarked by Stoyoff (1999, cited in Gan, 2013, p.93):

1. The practicum is integrated into the academic program;
2. The delivery of the practicum emphasizes a team approach. The team includes mentor teachers, university supervising teacher, language program managers, and the practicum student teachers;
3. The practicum provides intensive modeling and coaching;
4. The practicum incorporates extensive, systematic observation; and
5. The practicum experience is assessed by means of a portfolio.

(Stoyoff, 1999, cited in Gan, 2013, p.93)

Benefit of teaching practicum

Numerous studies have mentioned teaching practicum as a chance for teacher trainees to put their theoretical knowledge about teaching into practical use (Eyers, 2004; Gowers, Phillips & Walters, 2005; Phairee et.al., 2008). It is widely known that university courses normally “*do not duplicate real life*” (Arnett & Freeburg, 2008, cited in Tuli & File, 2009). Teaching is a skill, and therefore, though students can learn a lot *about* teaching by discussing it and talking about materials and techniques, they cannot really learn *to teach* without doing constant practice in real context (Gowers, Phillips & Walters, 2005). Clearly, teaching practicum provides genuine learning for student teachers involved. During their internship, they have a chance to “*approach the real teaching situation*”, “*try out techniques*”, “*practice with assessment*”, and to expose to “*real learners, their learning problems and the factors which influence their learning*” (Gowers, Phillips & Walters, 2005). Obviously, student teachers are brought face to face with concrete situations in the classrooms, and start to see how theories that they have learnt at the university

should be applied in specific incidents and what kind of adjustments they need to perform. Such understanding and trials serves as a basis for student teachers to better prepare for their future teaching jobs.

Through teaching practicum, teacher trainees are able to develop self-control and interpersonal sensitivity which are important traits that they would need during their professional lives (Eraut, 1988, cited in Yan & He, 2009). Moreover, being placed in a teaching practicum to try the daily tasks that a real teacher has to do, the trainees learn and practise independent problem-solving skill, co-working with fellow staff teachers and developing professional values and attitudes (Ramsden, 1992). Through their performance in teaching practicum, student teachers can confirm that they have chosen the right career (Stoyoff, 1999; Farrell, 2007, all cited in Gan, 2013, p.93). After completing the practicum, they gain “*professional knowledge about workplace behaviors*” and feel “*better prepared to enter the workforce and/or attend graduate school*” (Simons et.al., 2012, p.332).

In summary, a teaching practicum offers students opportunities to try out what they have learnt about teaching at the university in real school contexts. It also teaches students professional skills and values of the teaching job and contributes to their final decision of whether or not pursuing the teaching career.

METHODOLOGY

Background context of the research

The six-week compulsory teaching practicum of ULIS students

Every year, from February to end of March, all forth-year students of FELTE (Faculty of English Language Teacher Education) have to complete a six-week teaching practicum at a local high school. They can choose to either register to a team of trainees to an assigned partner school with ULIS in Ha Noi or take a stand-alone practicum to any other high school in Viet Nam provided that they are accepted by that particular school. In this research, only ***assigned practicum*** (or placement practicum) is concerned.

The teaching practicum reflects a partnership between the teacher education institution – ULIS – and the high school – which offers concrete teaching context for students to practice being a teacher. Stakeholders directly involved in the practicum are a ULIS supervisor (normally a lecturer or a training officer), the host school’s practicum management board, mentoring teachers (so-called supporting teachers), students at the host school and the teacher trainees. This research only dealt with the ***teacher trainees’ perspectives***.

As stated in the Practicum Guidelines issued by the Training Department of ULIS, the teaching practicum aims at providing students practical experience of *being a head teacher* (e.g. managing class behavior, keeping disciplines, motivating students in extra-curriculum activities, etc.) and *being a teaching practitioner* (e.g. delivering subject knowledge during intact hours, using their professional skills and knowledge). The first two weeks of the practicum are spent observing schoolwork and making acquaintance with their mentors, students and the workload that a teacher is supposed to face. From week 3 onwards, teacher trainees are requested to prepare lesson plans and teach classes. The number of hours that each trainee teaches varies upon their corresponding mentor's decision, but not fewer than 4 hours. It is well worth noted that the head-teacher mentor and the teaching-practitioner mentor are not necessary one person.

Regarding the practice of head-teacher, the mentors will give scores out of 100 to evaluate the trainees' achievement basing on the activity plans that the trainee makes at the beginning of each week, how far they can realize such a plan, to what extent they can develop a good rapport with the class, and to what level they can encourage positive changes of students' behavior in the class. As for the teaching practice, the mentor will assess the trainees by using a score scale of 100 basing on their ability to make a feasible lesson plan to the lesson they are going to teach, how far they can realize that plan, whether they can manage the class and involve students in the activity, and so on.

Total score = (score for head-teacher practice + score for teaching practice*2)/3

The practicum portfolio of each trainee consists of: (1) at least FOUR lesson plans of the teaching lessons they were assessed on; (2) at least FOUR evaluation checklists of their mentor on the corresponding assessed teaching lessons; (3) SIX weekly activity reports; (4) the final score notice by both mentors. Besides, there are six meeting minutes of weekly team meetings which record weekly information about advantages and challenges trainees in the team have during the practicum.

Participants of the research

The target population was ULIS teacher trainees of English Language, cohort QHF.2010. The respondents of this research were 15 students of the trainee team to a local high school in Hanoi. Selection of respondents was carried out using the convenience sampling method. As the researchers were ULIS supervisors of the team at that high school, they were able to understand the specific features of that school, observe the trainee participants doing their jobs and easy to cross check the information suggested by the participants.

Data collection methods and procedure

This multiple-case study took in-depth interview, field observation and portfolio analysis as the source of data.

A crucial tool to gather information in this study was **interview**. Powney and Watts (1984, cited in Verma & Mallick, 1999, p.122) defines it as “*an interaction between three elements: the interviewer, the interviewee, and the context of the interview including the issue questions raised in the interview*”. The researchers applied the method since it could explore in greater detail and in depth some particularly important aspects and address other closely related topics (that other tools, questionnaire for example, could not pull out) (Brenner, 1981, cited in Verma & Mallick, 1999, p.122). In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with *ten trainees* from three different class types at that high school. Due to time constraints, there were 5 individual interviews and 2 group interviews conducted. Rather than a formal setting, each interview lasted around 30 - 45 minutes and all were more of informal chats and/or sharing sessions and carried out in Vietnamese. The researchers aimed at putting the participants in the most relaxing atmosphere so that they could feel free to express their opinions.

In an attempt to seek for evidence to answer the research questions, **observation techniques** and **portfolio study** were taken into use. As a researcher is in the environment but not a participant in the environment itself, he/she is able to recognize visibly important behaviors that questionnaires and interviews with participants might not reveal. The researchers observed two lessons delivered by two different mentors in order to have a brief overview of how English classes at the host school were going on and anticipate possible advantages/challenges that the trainees might be enjoying/facing. As for the portfolio study, the researchers paid due attention to minutes of weekly team meeting and the trainees’ individual weekly reports since they played the role of a “*real insider instrument*” (McDonough, 1994, p.63, cited in Gan, 2013, p.97). Such documents detailed the following two categories: *Experimenting with real teaching* and *Developing professional working skills*.

Data analysis

The data were analysed under broad categories. Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Ates & Eslami, 2012; all cited in Gan, 2013, p.98) is believed to allow in-depth understanding of the research issues. To be more specific, the researchers adopted a parallel fashion while analyzing data from survey questionnaires and interviews. Information from meetings and reports was used to support or clarify the research result when necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ 1: Teaching practicum as a time of experimenting with real teaching

Lesson planning

Interview data suggest that writing a feasible lesson plan come top of the list with 7 out of 10 participants stating that the practicum taught them a lot or quite a lot about it. The respondents shared a common experience that their first lesson plans were commented by their mentors as being “*too broad*” (Tuyet’s), “*too ambitious*” (Thao’s, Lan’s and Nga’s), “*too difficult to realize for 10th-graders*” (Hien’s, Minh’s and Khoa’s), and/or “*out of lesson focus*” (Thuy’s, Hien’s and Tuyet’s). Obviously, identifying focal content knowledge that needs teaching was a major problem of surveyed trainees at the starting point of their practicum. The tendency, as reported by the respondents, was either to include as many fun games as possible to attract students or to use difficult activities that required a higher level of English proficiency than the students’ current levels. The trainees also noted that their lesson planning skills were better and better as the time went by, reasoning that comments from mentors and their experienced with students’ English level, their motivation and learning styles had been the essential factors leading to such improvements.

The ability to adapt lesson plans to teach different classes was another skill that the teaching practicum helped to teacher trainees to develop. The number of trainees indicating this improvement was nearly three times more than those giving a “not at all” statement. However, the extent to which they actually produced successful adaptation was unknown when data from both interview and minute meetings were consulted.

Extract 1/ Interview 2

“I taught Unit 12 - Reading skill three times in week 3 because my mentor is in charge of three 10-grade classes. She said that I didn’t need to make three separate lesson plans so I used the same for all classes. It worked well in the first class – 10D1 - the D- block class, but 10A1 and 10A2 could not follow my lesson. So I got a lesson for myself – I have to make some changes in plans for different classes.” (Thao)

Extract 1/ Minute 4 (week 4)

“Many trainees have taught the same lessons to different classes. Several say that it is boring to do so.”

Pedagogical technique practices

Opportunities to try out teaching techniques that they were taught at the university into the real teaching context were among the benefits that the teaching practicum offered the trainees. However the possibility of application remained rather controversial with six participants expressing their confidence in incorporating innovative techniques into teaching compared to the

other four stating that they could not apply or just somehow apply the techniques. Besides interviews, meeting minutes further reasoned this finding.

Extract 2/ Interview 3

“I was lucky to teach an English specialized class – 11CA. Their English level was as high as our first year students, so I could use different techniques of teaching four skills in the class. For example, they could quickly prepare a role-play for “after you listen” following my instruction.”

(Phong)

Extract 2/ Minute 5 (week 5)

“Students like lively lessons. They like to play competitive games. But they also like to prepare for the mid-term exams.”

Data from interview and minutes reveal two main sources of reasons for the abovementioned contrary. On one extreme, it is easier to try new teaching ideas and organize group activities with a group of high achievers. Also, such a group of students is often highly motivated to study English; therefore, they are more open to challenging tasks presented by the trainees. On the other extreme, students might be under such great pressure of exams that they do not feel like participating in any activities other than review and test preparation lessons.

It is noticeable that there was a mismatch between applying communicative teaching techniques and covering the prescribed content of knowledge as described by the interviewed trainees. Half of them said that it was a huge challenge to administer pair-work and group-work during class time because very often, group members would turn to discuss in Vietnamese rather than English. Also, it took time to explain the job each member was supposed to do; and therefore, they might not be able to finish the lesson content. Such a scenario was common in lessons of all four skills and especially, language focus.

Extract 3/ Interview 7

“My mentor suggested me omitting elicitation of vocabulary meanings and providing meanings of new words directly instead. She also said that I should prepare a list of new words rather than asking students which words in the reading passage they don’t know. Time should be saved to finish tasks in the textbook.” **(Minh)**

Extract 4/ Interview 6

“Language focus lessons always frighten me. How can I teach all about three sounds and two grammar areas within a period? Not enough time even for just mechanical practices, let alone communicative activities.” **(Khoa)**

Time management

Contrary to the mismatch mentioned above, the ability to finish a lesson within a teaching period (i.e. 45 minutes) is an achievement mentioned by most of the participants. Eight out ten trainees highlighted that the more they taught, the better they could deal with time management issues.

Extract 5/ Interview 1

“My first lesson was dreadful. I was thinking that students should be warmed up, and I brought a song to class and played “slap-the-board” game. Then another typhoon game to check students’ remembering of new words. Then one out of three reading tasks and the bell rang. My mentor told me that games were for nothing, finishing the main content was the most important. The 2nd lesson still lacked some minutes but the 3rd and 4th went well!” (*Tuyet*)

Extract 3/ Minute 2 (week 2)

“Lesson plans “*in flame*” [a joke by the trainees, which means unable to complete the lesson within 45 minute] were common in 15/22 trainees’ lessons. Time flew.”

Extract 4/ Minute 5 (week 5)

“As reported by 30 trainees who taught this week, no more lessons ran out of time. Now we know how to control the class and what should be included in each lesson.”

Semi-structured interviews and minutes of team meetings confirm the assumption that once teacher trainees held clearer and clearer understanding of the students they were teaching such as the level of students, their characteristics and the main content of knowledge that had to be covered in each lesson, they could better manage their time. It is worth noting that success in managing time may not always go with a successful learner-centered lesson.

Practices with assessment

In contrast with suggestion from literature, practice with assessment was not a remarkable benefit of the teaching practicum in this host school. More than half of the trainees stated that they gained no experience in test construction. Data from all interviews and meeting minutes addressed the over-carefulness of the host school as the main reason. Although the teaching practicum was carried out during mid-term exam time, the host school could not place their trust on the inexperienced trainees to design such important tests for their students. Moreover, even the 15-minute tests were frequently written by the mentors and given to the trainees to administer in the class rather than being designed by the trainees. As for “quite a lot” or “a lot” of test marking was done by all trainees, in-depth interviews and minutes show that they were mostly multiple-choice tests which could be marked objectively. Therefore, trainees did not actually work with using rubrics to score such tests.

Teaching practicum as a time to develop professional working skills

“*Self-control*” was mentioned by all trainees as the most important traits that they fostered during the practicum. The respondents attributed “*self-control*” to the ability to control their emotions and set priorities in their practicum. Three out of ten trainees in this research worked with naughty classes who did not pay respect to them in the first practicum week and they reported a better and better relationship with the classes. One trainee was assigned the “demon class” of the school and she nearly burst into tears in the first few team meetings when talking about the students’ attitude and behaviors.

Extract 5/ Minute 1 (Week 1)

“They [students of class 11A] don’t listen to the trainee [Thuy]. When found gambling in class, they insisted on the trainee not to tell their head teachers, otherwise they would not support her.”

Extract 6/ Minute 3 (Week 3)

“The difficult case of 11A again. They have stopped gambling game in class but they are not cooperative in any activities host by the teacher trainee. Actually, they are not cooperative with their head teacher, either.”

Sad and stressful as she was, Thuy said that she would never cry in front of the students even though she had always very much wanted to. Instead, she grew calmer as time went. She also learnt from her mentor that with such a class, it was next to impossible to change all of them, and that establishing a harmonious relationship with the positive half of the class would already be her success. Consequently, she gradually felt more released with the host class and spent more time and energy preparing for her teaching lessons.

Independent problem-solving skill was developed highly by all trainees. They remarked that prior to the practicum, they had never thought that the workload of high school teachers would be that heavy. Several situations might occur within a working day, ranging from students not doing homework to unexpected disputes sparked off among students. By really putting themselves on the daily duties that a teacher had to complete besides teaching, trainees learnt to solve the problems in time on their own.

Extract 6/ Interview 1

“Huy, a boy in my class, is not a weak student at all because he has been studying at Apollo for five years. However, he often sat in silent with crossing arms and never answered my questions. Feel like he was supervising me. I decided to have a chat with him during break time. I asked him to give me some ideas about bettering my lesson (and my pronunciation as well!). I also told him that if he continued to refuse supporting me, my practicum results would turn out badly. To my surprise, the following lessons went much smoother with his cooperation.” **(Tuyet)**

Extract 7/ Interview 3

“Not all the time you can consult your mentors on what was happening in class. You have to learn to react as quickly as possible.” (Phong)

Extract 8/ Interview 6

“I regret to say that my mentor did not help me very much with classroom management issues. Like when the class prepared a small party to celebrate Women’s Day and students expected *me* to support them financially, but I said I would contribute a third of the expense and the rest must be covered by class budget. Students were disappointed, telling me that they *did not want* the party any more. So I consulted with my mentor, but to my surprise, she simply said “it’s up to you”. Then, I had to make my own decision...” (Hien)

Co-working with other fellow trainees was another professional trait practiced by all trainees. Eight out of ten trainees enjoyed having a/some fellow trainee(s) working with the same class. The reasons ranged from “*having another shoulder to share the work burden*” (Lan), “*to keep class under discipline easier*” (Minh, Nga, Phong and Thao) to “*having someone to share money when hosting class activities or forums*” (Lan, Khoa, Hien and Phong). The two trainees who did not have any fellow to work with expressed their loneliness on facing with students alone. Data from trainees also show that the experience of co-working in teaching practicum was far different from that in normal group assignments at university.

Extract 9/ Interview 2

“Group assignments at university was not as demanding as co-working here. With group assignment, the decision you make doesn’t affect anybody other than you. Here in teaching practicum, discussion and negotiation with fellow trainees required you to imagine the future scenario when, for example, when organizing a forum.” (Thao)

Extract 10/ Interview 5

“I was paired with an introverted fellow trainee, and at first I found unable to work with her. She was likely to stop me from any heated ideas to stir up the class. Then, I discovered a way to work harmoniously with her: I would be in charge of holding activities and she would take responsibility for logistic issues. It turned out to be fun: she started to ask students about their favorite snacks and class decoration.” (Minh)

Discussion and implication

As a chance for experiments of pedagogical techniques, the teaching practicum has taught the surveyed teacher trainees valuable lessons on lesson planning and time management. These two techniques witnessed the highest level of changes in trainees. This was an indication of teacher trainees’ growing understanding of real learners’ proficiency level and their learning problems as well as specific lesson objectives (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005, p.2). However,

as noted before, successful time management does not automatically entail a successful learner-centered classroom.

Innovative pedagogical practices remained debatable among trainees as they showed a mix of opinions to this issue. Those who found it difficult to translate concepts and techniques learned in ELT courses into their classroom might have experienced a “reality shock” (Vennman, 1984) on realizing how difficult it would be to keep being “communicative”, “task-based” and “motivating” while students and their mentors were actually familiar with traditional styles of teaching. Moore (2003, cited in Gan, 2013) discovers that the teacher trainees tend to imitate their mentors’ teaching style and method regardless of whether they were contrast with what were presented in their ELT courses. Also, students’ level of proficiency, prescribed content of knowledge and time limitation appeared to be another main source of constraint to the application of innovative pedagogical techniques in the course book. This fact implies a gap between the theories presented in ULIS classrooms and the realities in traditional classrooms of the host school. Hence, a question that must be addressed is how to lessen the prescribed objectives of each lesson so that trainees can have a chance to see the techniques working in reality.

Practice with assessment was a low-rated job that teacher trainees took. The fact that students had no chance to write an English test was explained by the overlapping of teaching practicum and the school’s mid-term exam time. Therefore, it is advisable that the university choose a more suitable period of time to send the trainees for practicum.

Regarding the development of professional working skills during the teaching practicum, “*self-control*”, “*independent problem-solving skill*” and “*co-working with fellow trainees*” (Ramsden, 1992) are the three traits arousing the majority of trainees’ agreement. They mostly learnt these skills through consultation with mentors or by their own intuition, and in tough cases, they failed. A suggestion is that ULIS may require all trainees to take a course on soft skills before undergo their practicum.

CONCLUSION

This research report aims at outlining major lessons that a group of teacher trainees acquired during their teaching practicum. The results of the study show that trainees learned a lot of skills necessary to survive in their future teaching career. Also, they remained unsure of the possibility to apply communicative techniques into their teaching lessons.

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