

Affordances and Constraints of Teaching Practicum on MA TESOL/ Applied Linguistics Programmes in Bangladesh: A Comparative Case Analysis

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Abstract

The teaching practicum is a core component of teacher preparation programmes. It facilitates hands-on learning and allows participants to make connections between teaching practice and the educational theories, and different approaches and methods of teaching that they are exposed to during their training as future teachers. This paper reports on a study that investigated the provision of teaching practicum in four universities in Bangladesh. The study adopted a qualitative approach, using document analysis and interviews as primary data collection tools. The data were analyzed thematically using Wallace's (1991) models of teacher education as the analytical framework. In this multiple case study, the contents, tasks and activities of teaching practicum modules were compared and contrasted across the institutions. The study found that privately-funded higher education institutions generally offered greater exposure to hands-on learning opportunities than the public universities. There were variations across institutions in the way they offered opportunities for classroom observation, lesson planning, practice teaching and post-practicum conversations with teacher mentors. The data also revealed that none of the universities provided any practicum opportunities focused on online or blended teaching, one common limitation of these practicum programmes.

Keywords: Teaching Practicum, Practice Teaching, Classroom Observation, Reflective Report, Lesson Plan, Student Teachers, Demonstrations.

INTRODUCTION

Pre-service teacher education is crucial for aspiring teachers in transitioning to becoming actual teachers. Many Bangladeshi universities offer MA TESOL/Applied Linguistics programmes for aspiring EFL teachers. These courses aim to train future language teachers in theoretical knowledge and hands-on learning of classroom teaching and classroom management. Engaging students in an authentic, real classroom context is essential to developing teaching skills. Many MA in TESOL/Applied Linguistics programmes in top-ranked universities around the world include a teaching practicum component to allow students to gain practical teaching experience. For example, in Teachers College at Columbia University, MA TESOL students teach ESL language courses to immigrants and gain valuable experience of designing and teaching language proficiency courses under the supervision of a teacher mentor. However, the lack of a real classroom setting in some contexts might force programme directors to arrange for micro-teaching sessions or sending trainees to schools to work as teachers or teachers' assistants for a short stint. This study aimed to investigate the provision of teaching practicum on MA TESOL/Applied Linguistics programmes in Bangladesh. It also examined the content and delivery of the courses that aim to facilitate student teachers' development as language teachers during their MA in TESOL/Applied Linguistics.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do English/Linguistics/Education departments in Bangladesh incorporate different components of the teaching practicum module on their MA in TESOL or Applied Linguistics programmes?
2. What is the intended role of the teaching practicum module in the professional preparation of aspiring ESL/EFL teachers?
3. What are the perceived strengths and shortcomings of the teaching practicum module offered at selected universities in Bangladesh?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most teacher education programmes have two primary components: theories and practice. Theoretical knowledge consists of knowledge of language systems, theories of learning, understanding of the processes underlying language learning, lesson planning, materials design and approaches and methods of teaching. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, is knowledge and skills gained through practice teaching opportunities. Richards (1987), for example, suggests four distinct types of learning experiences that aid student teachers in completing their education on 'how to teach':

- a. Practice teaching,
- b. Observation,
- c. Self and peer observations and
- d. Seminars and discussion activities.

A balanced combination of theoretical knowledge and practical experience can ensure proper preparation for a career in teaching. Teacher cognition for teaching develops from complex interactions between theoretical knowledge they receive and the results of their actions in particular contexts of teaching (Tsui, 2012). Ultimately the context is pivotal to teacher learning as a teacher's effectiveness and the development of 'expertise' (Farrell, 2013) greatly depends on how the teacher makes sense of and interacts with their context. Teachers come up with particular strategies and techniques that they deem necessary in the light of their practical experience (Khan et al., 2022). The teaching profession is of evolutionary nature as it is conditioned by developments in social, political and technological sectors (Sachs, 2003). Teachers need to adapt to frequently changing curriculum and their evolving contexts. Thus, teacher education is about getting pre-service teachers equipped with the continuous process of learning to teach rather than acquiring a fixed set of practices (Choi & Poudel, 2022; Tsui, 2012). Opportunities for teaching allows aspiring teachers to apply their theoretical knowledge of teaching in practice and see what modifications and adjustments are required in the actual act of teaching.

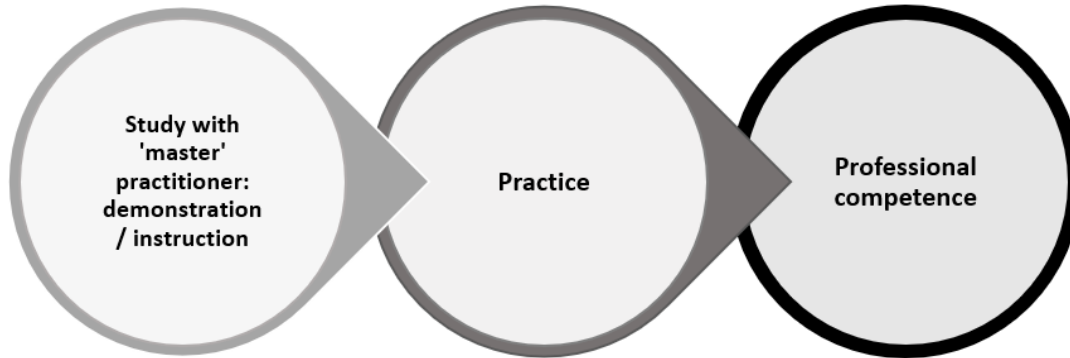
Teacher Education Models

While discussing how professional education and training are dispersed and how a person engaged in the teaching profession develops his professionalism, Wallace (1991) identifies three distinct teacher education models to describe the flow and cycle of teacher education: the craft model, the applied science model and the reflective model. In the past three decades, there have been many research studies and publications on teachers' professional learning, developing expertise in teaching, theories of education, and teacher education. To date, Wallace (1991) remains a standard reference for any discussion on teacher education. The three teacher education models that he describes have often been cited by researchers (e.g. Mann & Walsh, 2013; Richards & Lockhart, 1994) and referred to by programme developers around the world.

The Craft Model

Known to be the oldest form of professional education, the craft model is still used in ESL teacher education. The conceptual basis of the craft model is widely used in teaching practicum courses where the student teachers (STs) are required to work with or under cooperating teachers. Many short initial training courses like the CELTA are often primarily craft-oriented. The craft model requires the ST to work closely with the expert or cooperating teacher. The ST is supposed to learn by imitating the teaching techniques used by the cooperating teacher. According to Wallace (1991), the craft model for ESL teacher education combines experiential learning with scientific knowledge. The model assumes that knowledge for teaching is acquired by observation, instruction and practice.

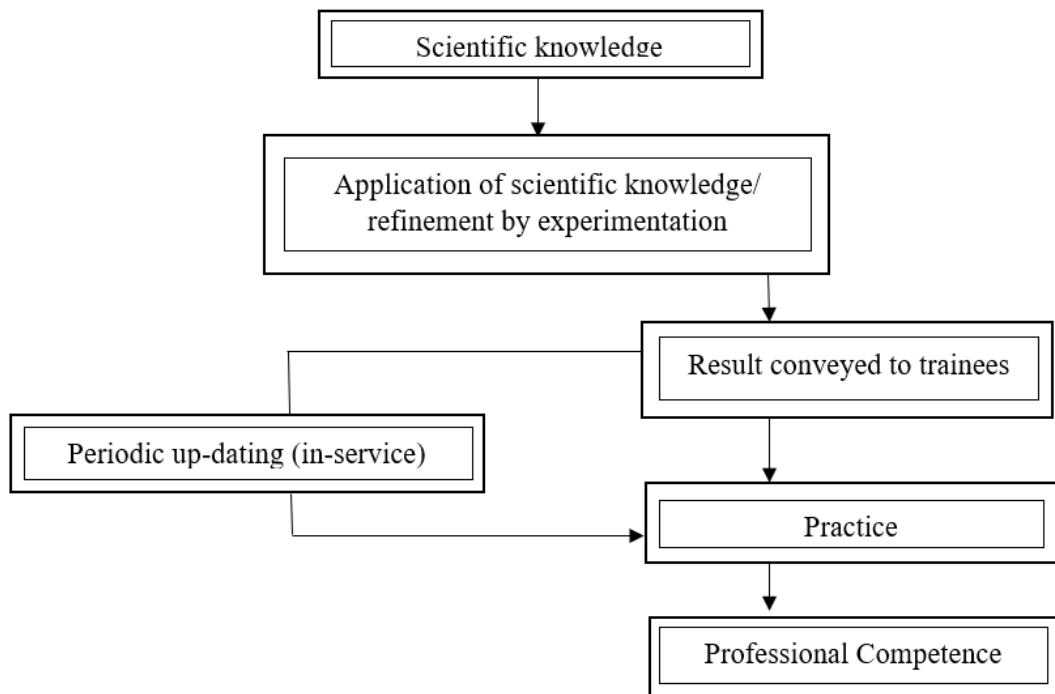
Figure 1: The craft model of professional education (Wallace, 1991, p. 6)



The Applied Science Model

Wallace (1991) developed the applied science model in ESL teacher education programmes based on Donald A. Schon's 'Technical Rationality'. This model, which incorporates empirical evidence from SLA research and sociocultural theory, is commonly used in MA TESOL

Figure 2: Applied science model (Wallace, 1991, p. 9)

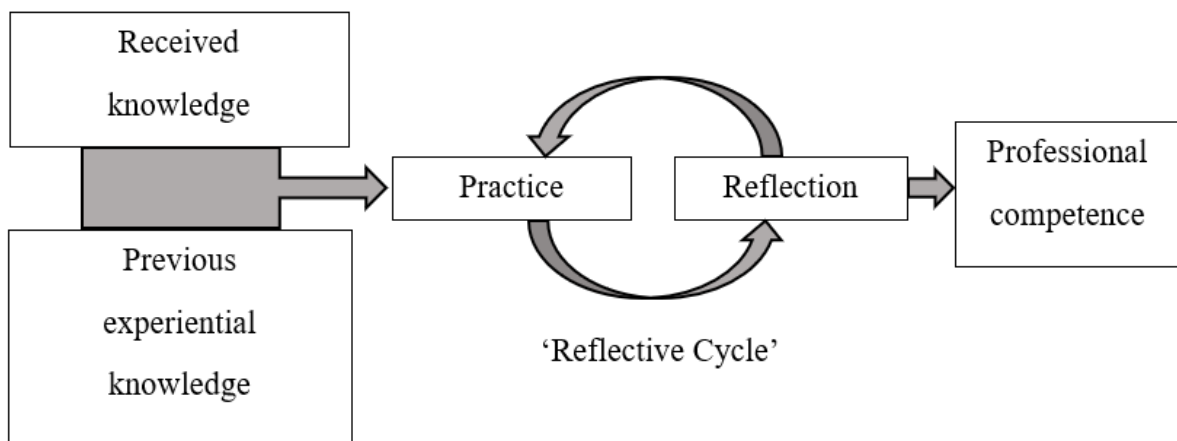


qualifications to design and facilitate teaching practicums, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of teaching science. The science of teaching can be examined rationally and objectively. Teachers are taught the theories of learning, approaches and methods of teaching derived from empirical research. The model suggests that only the experts in the teaching field can convey and pass on the theories and teachers are considered qualified to teach when they are capable of implementing such theories in practice. Wallace (1991) depicted the applied science model using a diagram. The diagram shows how teachers develop professional competence by gaining scientific knowledge.

The Reflective Model

The reflective model of teacher training is a teacher education framework emphasizing the importance of reflective practice in ensuring effective teaching practices. As Wallace (1991) points out, reflective practice is the process of actively and deliberately thinking about one's own teaching practices and experiences to learn from them and improve future teaching. In the reflective model, teacher training is structured around the idea of cycles of reflection and action. Trainee teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own teaching experiences, identify areas for improvement, and act based on this reflection (Wallace, 1991). This model also emphasizes the importance of supportive mentorship and collaboration in teacher training.

Figure 3- The reflective model (Wallace, 1991, p.15)



Overall, the reflective teacher training model aims to foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement within the teaching profession, helping trainee teachers become more effective and skilled educators.

THE TEACHING PRACTICUM: PRACTICE TEACHING TYPES

Practice teaching is a core component of most teacher education programmes in language teaching. Richards and Farrell (2011) state that the intention is to provide the STs with the link between the academic courses and the 'real' world of teaching. In this regard, they also categorize two types of practice teaching: microteaching and teaching an EFL/ESL/ESOL class:

Microteaching

Richards and Farrell (2011) described an approach that is frequently used in teacher training in a sequence of planning, teaching, and critiquing. The series has three primary features. Generally, in microteaching, an ST teaches a 5-10 minute microlesson. The lesson has a fairly narrow focus, and a review of the ST's performance comes right after the lesson. If necessary, the planning, teaching, and critiquing sequence can also be followed in a new cycle.

Teaching an EFL/ESOL Class

Procedures used in teaching an EFL/ESL/ESOL class vary from institution to institution. However, Richards and Farrell (2011) identify the following common procedure in setting up teaching practice in an ESOL class. Firstly, finding a site to carry out practice teaching, as teaching an ESOL class means teaching in a real second language classroom. Usually, the institution where the ST is studying provides such facilities, or the ST has to seek practicum privileges from outside institutions. Secondly, the ST has to work with a cooperating teacher who will later comment thoroughly on the strengths and weaknesses of the ST's teaching repertoire. Often, this is extra work on the cooperating teacher's part as he/she has to review lesson plans and give feedback. Thirdly, it is extremely necessary to coordinate the practice-teaching experience. Here the supervising teacher usually has an active role. However, sometimes it is left entirely at the discretion of the cooperating teacher, mostly when the students go out to seek practice teaching. Lastly, one has to learn from the practice teaching in an EFL/ESOL class. After all, the practice teaching is an opportunity to learn the process of how to teach. If an ST aims to teach the school level language learners, he/she should look for schools to practice teaching. They can also choose an unfamiliar context to challenge their capability and gather useful experience (Richards & Farrell, 2011).

Teachers supervising student teachers on practice teaching modules may draw on one or more models of teacher education. Although the craft model is the oldest one, the reflective model has gained popularity in teacher education programmes around the world (Farrell, 2016). Engaging in dialogues with students and other teachers on different aspects of teaching, identifying areas where improvement is required and developing the ability to "make informed decisions" (Farrell, 2016, p. 225) are core focal points in this model.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. The objective was to explore the facilitation of teaching practicums, their components including lesson observation, lesson plans, practice teaching, their strengths and weaknesses, post-practicum dialogues, and perceived limitations. In addition to responses collected from teachers and students, the programme handbooks were analyzed to compare the contents of teaching practicum modules across the four institutions based on their underlying educational philosophies and teacher training models.

The study includes responses from one teacher and two students from each university, a total of twelve respondents from four universities in Bangladesh. We were aware that this small sample did not fully represent the teaching practicum repertoire in those four Bangladeshi universities. However, we took heart from the assertion made by eminent applied linguist Dornyei (2007) about the aim of qualitative inquiries which is to generate insights that can be

“illuminating” and help “make sense of other situations”, not to arrive at generalizable findings across institutions (p. 59). The frame had two public and two private universities, so we thought that the nuances of practicum components implemented in these two sectors would allow for comparison and generate valuable insights.

For the research we chose the universities based on convenience. The first author of this paper visited the sites and approached teachers who had the experience of teaching MA teaching practicum courses and invited them to participate in the research. The purpose was to obtain through individual interviews an overview of the teaching practicum course at the respective university. The students were subsequently chosen based on the recommendations of the individual teachers who had participated in the interviews. So, the sampling procedure was a combination of convenient and purposive sampling techniques. The first researcher who collected data spent much time at the research sites trying to build friendly relationships with the participants based on openness and trust to elicit genuine responses from them during the interviews.

Table 1: Profile of teacher participants

SL	Participants (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Age range	Workplace
1	AT	F	30-35	Government University
2	BT	M	55-60	Government University
3	CT	M	45-50	Non-Government University
4	DT	M	55-60	Non-Government University

Table 1 above shows the profile of teacher participants. The student participants were between 23-25 age range and half of them were female. We had shared the questions used during the interviews with a senior academic that we knew on a personal level, and we modified some of them based on his feedback. This was done to validate the questions before their actual use.

We conducted qualitative content analysis of the curriculum documents as well as of the data collected from the respondents. Our aim while interpreting the data was to identify the particular components of the teaching practicum in the institutions. For the document analysis part, the syllabus of the practicum programmes collected from the above universities were compared and evaluated in light of the teacher education models in Wallace (1991).

FINDINGS

In this section, we present findings from interviews and document analysis in regard to how different components of the teaching practicum modules are implemented in selected universities. To maintain the interviewees' privacy, the names of the institutions and the interviewees, teachers, and students are not mentioned anywhere in the paper. However, to keep track of the institutions and the responses from the interviewees, the universities are identified as A, B, C and D, where A and B are public universities and C and D are private universities. The students are identified as S1 or S2 after the university annotation, such as AS1. Similarly, the teachers' responses are characterized by adding a T after the university annotation, such as AT, as shown in Table 1 above.

Document analysis of the syllabuses of the practicum modules in the above universities revealed that the following components were embedded in the curriculum in all of these institutions: classroom observation, lesson planning and practice teaching. So, the interview questions were designed to extract information on how these components are implemented in these universities.

Classroom Observation

To learn how an expert teacher teaches, a student teacher must observe his/her class. Reading a verbal description of a classroom or watching a video recording is not as effective as sitting in a real classroom and observing the teacher and the students in action. Thus, the student teacher can gather essential skills for teaching through observing a real classroom. However, opportunities for observation varied in scope in these universities. One teacher from University A pointed out that

They [the student teachers] are supposed to observe one language class, and at the end of the practicum, they are supposed to submit an observation report. - AT

Lesson observation in this institution primarily focused on preparing an observation checklist and observing a class with a tool to help categorize the lesson's strengths and weaknesses. However, there was no scope to observe several teachers teaching a number of classes over a period of time. The scope appeared to be narrower in the other public university. The teacher from University B emphasized gathering knowledge regarding teacher education as the main focus,

We follow the book written by Michael J. Wallace. Students are supposed to implement the ideas they have gathered through reading. - BT

When asked how the classroom observation activities are facilitated, teacher BT stated candidly that "...these kinds of activities are not given much importance by the teachers." This clearly deviates from the purpose of the practical component of classroom observation which needs to happen in an actual language classroom and not just through theoretical interpretation. BS2, a student from University B specified that "there was nothing like observing a classroom". The teacher from University B explained how observation is done:

Classroom observation is provisioned in two ways. Number one, they attend the oral examination where we ask them questions on various aspects of observation. Every student is interviewed for about 15 minutes for the semester final assessment. Very often, we get them to give class presentations on the procedures of class observation. This year we could not arrange class observation for them. - BT

Classroom observation means observing a class with the aim of learning and evaluating the teaching techniques the cooperating teacher uses. Replacing classroom observation with oral examination and presentation is not an ideal way to facilitate classroom observation. The teacher pointed out that there were nearly a hundred students in the cohort which made it difficult to assign them to English classes.

The two private universities in our study offered more varied exposure to lesson observation than the public universities discussed above. University C, a leading private university in Bangladesh, had two courses designed to facilitate the practicum components. Each of those courses enabled classroom observation. As the teacher from the university explained,

[Our] students are required to observe six classes at least; for teaching practicum one and for teaching practicum two, there is no limitation but at least six classes. - CT

To do these class observations, students at University C did not have to go outside their university. According to a student from the university, she and other students could easily obtain permission to observe the teachers because of prior acquaintance. She said, “I was privileged to see my other teachers' classes in this teaching practicum-2 courses” (CS2). Still, the students were assigned to observe one teacher, the dynamic of seeing several teachers in action and the opportunity for understanding commonalities and variation in teaching across teachers was rather limited.

In University D, the observations were also facilitated in external institutions. The teacher from this university mentioned that he had given them a letter authorising that this student may be allowed to observe classes in other institutions. Students were then required to write a report based on their experience of observation.

The Lesson Plan

To be effective in a classroom, having a lesson plan is necessary. Having a well-thought-out lesson plan can automatically boost a student teacher's confidence in conducting a class. Again, interview data reveals that the private universities seemed to offer more feedback and support to the students than the public universities. Regarding lesson plan development in the first public university, teacher AT said,

We teach them how to do a lesson plan, then they do a lesson plan and submit it.

The students from this public university agreed that they received instructions and templates for the lesson plan but there was no further discussion on the draft once they submitted their plan. The teacher received them and said their lesson plans were OK. Teacher BT from University B stated that they ask the students to “plan and prepare the lessons on a short syllabus”. However, student BS2 had a contradictory response about whether the supervising teacher aided in developing lesson plans. She said in confidence that she did not receive any support in

developing her lesson plan. She prepared it on her own. Regarding lesson planning, teacher CT highlighted the detailed procedure involved,

For all the processes, we have evaluation. For example, needs assessment is evaluated. Materials development is evaluated, lesson planning is evaluated.

University D differs in terms of evaluating lesson plans. There are two stages to lesson planning, and only the final lesson plan, based on which the students do their actual practice teaching, is evaluated. Teacher DT, in this regard, pointed out that

For the mock teaching, they must submit a lesson plan. We give feedback on the lesson plan. However, this time in the mock teaching, I did not mark them.

In this university, as the students pointed out, they can understand the shortcomings of their lesson plans during simulated teaching. In the final practice teaching, they modify certain parts and hand in a revised and well-rounded lesson plan.

Practice Teaching

The four universities had different approaches to facilitating this most crucial practicum component, practice teaching. University A arranged micro teaching where the students taught other student teachers. The teacher paid much attention to reflective reports after practice teaching. Teacher AT said,

They become much more aware of their own cognitions during their practice. They find out about their strengths and weaknesses when they sit down to write the reflective report. So, from my perspective, this might be the main learning point.

The teaching practicum is supposed to be primarily practical, but the absence of real students makes the sessions dull, as a student from University A pointed out,

I am not sure how relevant this practice teaching thing would be in my case because I did not get the feel of a real class. I did not get real questions from them [friends] because this was part of a theory course and we knew it. - AS2.

This was not the case for University A only. Participants from other institutions also admitted that the course was mostly theory-oriented. For instance, the other public university did not even have practice teaching. The teacher from University B stated,

If they become incredibly good in the English language, then we can expect that, or we can assume that they will turn out to be a good teacher.

The teacher downplayed the importance of teaching skills. For him, a good command of the English language would automatically make someone a good teacher. There are problems with this perspective. First, a better user of English does not necessarily make a better teacher as teaching is performance-based, and secondly, just 3-5 minutes of practice teaching, that even being voluntary on the student's part, is inadequate to train a teacher. Lastly, the course has no marks allocated for practicum components. A student from University B pointed out,

I did not spend hours in any actual classroom for my practice teaching experience, because our teachers are theory bound. - BS2

The private universities in our study generally offered greater opportunities for teaching. When asked how many practicum hours a student spends practicing teaching the University C teacher mentioned,

Demo two classes and micro-teaching two classes for TP2. For TP1, sometimes it goes up to four classes even. In TP2, they are developing the quiz questions, the mid-term questions, and based on that, and they are developing the rubrics as well. - CT

Teaching includes more than instruction. It also requires a teacher to give exams, prepare rubrics and evaluate. The practicum programme at University C is twofold. TP1 follows a workshop model, and TP2 follows the TA model, where the students teach alongside the teacher is a shadow teacher. University D is also a private university. Unlike University C, it has only one course for teaching practicum, but it tries to expose the students to actual teaching, though it might be lacking in terms of the time a student gets to teach in a real classroom. The teacher from University D responded,

In the beginning, we also get them to do team teaching because they have to prepare for individual teaching, but they might feel shy in the beginning. - DT

To accommodate the students with enough practice, the University A teacher suggests,

But if we can keep practicum as a separate course, then there might be more components that we would probably like to include. - AT

Similarly, teacher BT suggested that there should be a dedicated course to facilitate the student teachers with practicum components where the evaluation would be strictly based on the practical features and teaching performances.

Post-practicum Dialogues (student teacher-supervisor)

Post-teaching practicum dialogues are an essential part of the teacher education process. Students get feedback from their supervising teacher to develop their teaching repertoire. The teacher from University A declared,

I try to initiate a discussion. So, I asked them to submit a comprehensive report.

University B evaluates the students through exams, and there is no practicum opportunity. So, the scope for reflection and discussion is almost nil. Also, a student from University B pointed out how the teacher's background played a part in their lack of achievement.

First, I wanted ELT faculty to take the course. Still, I wonder why they selected a literature faculty for this higher-level course. - BS1

Discussions are supposed to follow up the reflective reports prepared upon the classroom observation and practice teaching experiences. As they do not do either of those, the students' reflective report is not prepared. Teacher CT mentioned,

We check the reflective observation journals and observation reports based on their learning and observations.

University D instructor shared what he took away from dialogues with the teacher. He suggested giving feedback following the sandwich theme, where the instructor starts with something positive, follows it up with some weaknesses and then wraps up with something positive.

The person who has taught, we give them feedback. We always tell the instructors to give feedback following the sandwich feedback scheme. - DT

Affordances and challenges

There was a dedicated part in the interview sessions for supervisors and student teachers, where they shared their perceptions regarding the teaching practicum courses, their limitations and affordances. All the institutions offered opportunities, albeit in varying degrees, for students to learn about teaching and gain some experience through observation, designing lesson plans, practice teaching and discussion with supervising teachers. There were limitations too. University A teacher pointed out that teaching practicum was a part of their teacher education course, so there was limited scope and time to conduct the practice teaching sessions effectively.

If we could keep practicum as a separate course, then there might be more components that we would probably like to include. - AT

The teacher from the other public university admitted the limitations of their practicum module. He, however, was optimistic that

Things will change, but it will take time. We are doing a lot in our department, but I would rather say, a little slowly. - BT

The teacher from University C which offers two modules, one theoretical and another practical, explained why they offered two modules while many other universities had just one:

Despite having two modules for teacher education and practicum, we feel that not all of our students get ready to teach in schools and colleges. - CT

The teacher from the other private university pointed out that arranging practice teaching sessions externally is a challenge. He, however, expressed optimism that they will be able to form partnerships with schools:

I hope that in the future we will have a memorandum of understanding with different schools and colleges and universities. We are working towards that goal. -DT

One common limitation was that there was no online platform in these universities. The participants mentioned that they used Google Classroom and created WhatsApp groups to facilitate sharing of materials. The teacher from University D pointed out that his institution was moving along the path of technological development and expressed optimism about having their own learning management systems.

DISCUSSION

In this section, we draw on the discussion on different teacher education models by Wallace (1991) to evaluate the practicum programmes present in the above universities. We also refer to the learning theories such as behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, connectivism, social development theory and experiential learning that underlie the practicum programmes.

University A

In University A, a combination of the craft model and the applied science model (Wallace, 1991) is adopted, where student teachers learn from observing practicing teachers as well as studying empirical research and practice teaching. The course focuses on preparing lesson plans and materials for demo classes, followed by observation of teachers' teaching methods. In accordance with Vygotsky's social development theory (1978), this institution emphasizes the importance of interaction in language learning. Kolb's experiential learning philosophy (Kolb, 1984; 2015) is implemented, with students 'learning by doing' in demo classes. However, Wallace's cycle of practice and reflection is not in practice there, as students only teach one class and reflect, and there is a lack of time for all practicum components.

University B

It appears that B. F. Skinner's (1963) learning philosophy, behaviorism, and Michael J. Wallace's applied science model (1981) are intertwined in the development of the practicum module at University B. The course, despite its name, is theory-bound and exam-based, resembling Wallace's applied science model. The lack of practice and interaction with cooperative teachers further hinders the application of social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

University C

The reflective model, as proposed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and Wurdinger and Carlson (2009), emphasizes experiential learning in university teaching. The Association of Experiential Education (2011) emphasizes the importance of reflection in experiences. University C's TP1 and TP2 courses follow the experiential learning model, with TP1 focusing on practical teaching and reflection, while TP2 follows the teaching assistantship model, where students imitate expert teachers. These models, compared to Wallace's reflective model, emphasize the importance of experiential learning in teaching and learning.

University D

The craft model and Kolb's experiential learning model (1984; 2015) are present in University D's practicum programme, which focuses on practical teaching, lesson planning, materials development, classroom observation, and reflective reports. Haynes' dynamic approach is low, as students observe only one teacher for three consecutive classes. The experiential learning model, as proposed by Kolb (1984; 2015), encourages firsthand, collaborative, and reflective learning. However, the 45-minute teaching time limits the scope for practicing and reflecting on practice.

Teaching practicum plays a crucial role in the professional preparation of aspiring ESL/EFL teachers. It provides opportunities to put in practice theories of language learning and teaching, approaches and methods of teaching, and gain practical experiences of teaching. Dialogues with supervising teachers may help them engage with their beliefs and if necessary, change certain

beliefs (Yuan & Lee, 2014). This facilitates aspiring teachers to gain new insights. Thus, the practicum module helps students take baby steps towards becoming teaching professionals. Of the four universities, two did not offer full-fledged practicum opportunities, relying solely on students' theoretical knowledge for progress assessment. However, all universities attempted to provide adequate theoretical knowledge before incorporating practicum components. One university, unlike others, provided an additional course to impart theoretical knowledge prior to offering the practicum course. There was no general sequence for facilitating practicum components, with some combining classroom observation and practice teaching, but all students had to prepare lesson plans before practice teaching. Reflective writing based on practice teaching experience and discussion with supervising teachers on areas of improvement were done by some and not by others.

CONCLUSION

The research explores the teaching practicum scenario in Bangladeshi universities through interviews with teachers and students. Getting a good understanding of a teacher's teaching style and teaching philosophy requires sustained involvement in observing teaching and interacting with the teacher. If a number of consecutive classes are observed, the student may get an idea of how a lesson proceeds and how a teacher adapts their practices to deal with any unforeseen situations. The study found that the programmes lack intensity in aspects such as classroom observation, lesson plans, practice teaching, and post-practicum dialogues. Private universities in Bangladesh were found to be better at facilitating practicum programmes, but they also had insufficient time for teaching practicum modules and limited support for online teaching. The study suggests that universities should be more open to the ever-changing academic environments and adopt new teaching approaches to meet the needs of student teachers. It is crucial to acquaint student teachers with a realistic academic milieu and provide substantial input on actual teaching in the teaching practicum course to prevent frustration and ensure retention in the profession. Also, after the COVID outbreak, classes were mostly moved to the online platform. Observing recorded classes would have allowed the students to understand and adopt the teaching strategies maintained on online platforms, as teaching online is quite different from teaching in person.

Universities can partner with schools and colleges to provide student teachers with practical language teaching experience. They can allocate a course for teaching practicum, teach theoretical knowledge before the practicum, evaluate student teachers based on performance, and conduct teaching sessions with real learners. Students should reflect on their experiences to become efficient teachers. As teaching shifts to online platforms, teachers should be trained to adapt to these changes.

The data collection process in our study focused only on pre-service teachers and trainee teachers. Future studies may include teachers training colleges who train in-service teachers to add more dynamic elements. Issues and challenges faced by trainee teachers may be investigated using narrative inquiry (Deocampo, 2020). Quantitative studies involving a much greater number of teachers would provide a general picture of the teaching practicum courses in Bangladesh. Qualitative studies may also adopt participatory research designs involving supervising teachers (Anderson, 2022) to explore best practices in preparing future teachers for a career in teaching.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Supervising Teachers

Name of the Supervising Teacher:

Institution of the Supervising Teacher:

1. What are the purposes of the teaching practicum?
2. What does it involve?
3. What do the students learn?
4. How do the students learn?
5. How do you evaluate the course?
6. What are the limitations?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Student Teachers

Name of the Student Teacher:

Institution of the Student Teacher:

Name of the institution where practicum was facilitated:

Initial Experience:

1. Did your institution facilitate the practicum programme, or did you seek practicum privilege in outside institutions?
2. Which level of students did you choose and why?
3. How did you manage the institution's principal or authority to provide you with a practicum opportunity? Would you please describe your experience?
4. What was the process through which you were appointed a cooperating teacher?

Practice Teaching (Practice and Actual Classroom Teaching):

1. How many practicum hours did you spend practicing teaching (Sample)?
2. How many practicum hours did you spend practicing teaching in an actual classroom?
3. Did you get practicum opportunities in online education?
4. Was the practicum programme giving you scope to learn and adopt new teaching styles?
5. How was your experience teaching online?
6. How was the teaching experience different from offline in-class teaching?

Lesson planning

1. Was there any freedom in teaching language topics, or did you adhere to the syllabus content outlined by the cooperative teacher?
2. Did you get enough time to prepare for your lesson?
3. Did your supervising teacher aid you in developing lesson plans?
4. Did your cooperating teacher aid you in developing lesson plans?

Lesson Observation (Recorded and Actual Classroom Observation)

1. How many practicum hours did you spend observing a classroom (Recorded)?
2. How many practicum hours did you spend observing your cooperating teacher in an actual classroom?
3. What are some techniques you inherited from your cooperating teacher's teaching?
4. Would you share the differences between your expectations and reality?



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