A Self-Study on the Challenges a University Supervisor Faced in Online Teaching Practicum and How She Met Them

Gülten Koşar, Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, Turkey*

ABSTRACT

This self-study explores a university supervisor's experiences of online teaching practicum to seek answers to the questions of what challenges she faced in online teaching practicum and what initiatives she undertook to respond to them. The data collected from the reflective journal she kept during online teaching practicum was subjected to thematic analysis. The findings revealed that she faced the challenges of avoiding communication breakdown between the mentor teachers and student teachers, the pressing need for strengthening student teachers' motivation, and offering guidance to student teachers as to teaching enjoyable and effective online lessons. The findings also revealed that she conducted continuous negotiations with both the mentor teachers and student teachers to rise to the challenges she faced, which she deemed to have a greater prominence in online teaching practicum in comparison with that in the teaching practicum carried out face-to-face.

KEYWORDS

Mentor teacher, online teaching practicum, self-study, student teacher, teacher educator

INTRODUCTION

Teaching practicum constitutes a fundamental component of the pre-service teacher education program in that it offers opportunities to the pre-service teacher for experiencing teaching in a real classroom environment (Ellen & Wright, 2014), thereby appealing enormously to them. To what extent the pre-service teacher benefits from teaching practicum is contingent upon a set of factors such as the strength of the relationship between the mentor teacher (Gray et al., 2019), the university supervisor and the pre-service teacher, the amount of support provided to the pre-service teacher by both the mentor teacher and the university supervisor, and the usefulness of the courses they have taken in the department in their teaching practicum. The university supervisor plays a vital role in endorsing the pre-service teacher in making the most of the teaching practicum (Barahona, 2019; Heggen et al., 2018) and in establishing a strong tie between the mentor teacher and the pre-service teacher.

*Corresponding Author

Face-to-face teaching practicum requires the university supervisor to supervise the pre-service teacher face-to-face in the placement school and on the campus. Nonetheless, the COVID-19 pandemic has obliged the initial pre-service English language teacher education program in the context of the study to conduct teaching practicum online, which has compelled the university supervisor to make adaptations to their duties of supervising the pre-service teacher and communicating with the mentor teacher and the pre-service teacher. Such a drastic change has brought along a range of challenges for all the parties actively involved in conducting teaching practicum. The university supervisor who is supposed to be the thread connecting the mentor teacher and the pre-service teacher to each other needs to shoulder weighty responsibility for helping the student teacher gain rewarding online teaching practicum experiences. I, having been a part of online teaching practicum for the first time, conducted this study with a view to sharing the challenges I faced in my online teaching practicum experiences and the steps I took to rise to them to enhance the effectiveness of online teaching practicum for the pre-service English teacher.

Teaching Practicum

Teaching practicum has a major part in the pre-service teacher education program for preparing pre-service teachers for the teaching profession as a result of giving them a chance to observe real classroom environments and to teach real students (Brown, Myers, & Collins, 2021) and in the formation of their teacher identities (e.g., Yuan, Liu, & Lee, 2019). Teaching practicum can also be alleged to be a period of time embedding invaluable experiences for pre-service teachers and during which there could be changes in their beliefs concerning teaching. For instance, the pre-service teachers who had traditional teaching beliefs and were not willing to integrate technology into teaching began to have positive perceptions regarding technology-centred student teaching following doing their teaching practicums in Han et al.'s (2017) study. Distinct approaches to the use of information communications technology at the placement school and on the campus could impact on pre-service teachers' views about the use of information communications technology in teaching. For example, McGarr and Gavaldon (2018) concluded that different affordances in relation to information communications technology in the initial teacher education program and the practicum school could exert influence on pre-service teachers' perceptions of the use of information communications technology in teaching.

Teaching practice at placement schools is highly valued by pre-service teachers and postulated to be more important than observing mentor teacher's teaching practices and the post-lesson sessions held with them (Chien, 2015). The review of research on teaching practicums conducted by Lawson et al. (2015) revealed that "collaboration with mentor teachers, the link between theory and practice, benefits from teacher educators" were from among the factors deemed to be important to pre-service teachers in teaching practicums (p. 401). Reflecting on teaching practicum experiences could help the mentor teacher and the student teacher gain deeper insights into their teaching practicum experiences. For example, the pre- and in-service English-as-a-foreign teachers in Altalhab et al.'s (2020) research had positive attitudes towards keeping reflective diaries and believed that reflective diaries should be mandatory in the teaching practicum. Dialogic interaction, which was explained to be the co-construction of meaning, was reported in Talbot et al.'s (2018) study as a means through which the university supervisor, the mentor teacher and the pre-service teacher could gain insights into each other's conceptions of teaching and learning.

Several factors could influence pre-service teachers' performance in teaching practicum such as pre-service teachers' previous teaching experiences and prior academic achievement (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2018), the extent to which the practicum environment stimulates pre-service teacher learning (Ulvik & Smith, 2011) and their prior schooling experiences (Ye, 2015). Lillejord and Børte (2016) indicated in their study that university and school parts of the pre-service teacher education have their own cultures and their attempts to try to understand each other's culture are likely to positively affect pre-service teacher professional learning in teaching practicum.

10 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/article/a-self-study-on-the-challenges-a-university-supervisor-faced-in-online-teaching-practicum-and-how-she-met-them/317218

Related Content

Universal Design for Learning: Using UDL to Make Teacher Education More Accessible and Inclusive for All
James Cressey (2017). *Advancing Next-Generation Teacher Education through Digital Tools and Applications (pp. 38-59).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/universal-design-for-learning/171221

Our Experiences and Voices: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on K-12 Instructional Practices
Prince Hycy Bull, Gerrelyn Chunn Patterson, Johnna Edwards Freestone, Sherna Julal Henryand Brittany N. Jackson (2022). *Redefining Teacher Education and Teacher Preparation Programs in the Post-COVID-19 Era (pp. 1-17).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/our-experiences-and-voices/294686

A Case Study of the Effectiveness of Online Graduate Teacher Education in TESOL
Peter Adamy, Amy Correiaand David Byrd (2022). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development (pp. 1-18).*
www.irma-international.org/article/a-case-study-of-the-effectiveness-of-online-graduate-teacher-education-in-tesol/284482

Middle School Mathematics Achievement: Effects of Math Teacher Professional Development
Gisele Ragusa, Shaobo Huangand Svetlana Levonisova (2024). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development (pp. 1-37).*
www.irma-international.org/article/middle-school-mathematics-achievement/337965

Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Effectiveness of Collaborative Reflection
Support Method: The Impact of Achievement Goal and Community
Identification