

Chapter 10

Evaluating Teaching Competence for TESOL Practicum: A Case Study of Vietnamese EFL Student Teachers

Trinh Ngoc Thanh

Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

The present study assesses teaching competence for TESOL practicum at two periods: before (pre-survey stage) and after (post-survey stage) Vietnamese EFL students teachers participated in teaching practicum. With reference to Chong and Cheah, a questionnaire was constructed, and the items were divided into three specific categories: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Quantitative findings from the item responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, and multiple regression analysis. For further interpretation, a qualitative analysis was also conducted, and the data for this analysis was collected from voluntary submission of reflection writing about teaching practicum from participants. Overall, the present study highlights key aspects in teaching practicum, and these aspects reflect constant struggle of student teachers in the early stage of teaching career. Some implications are to be discussed with regards to the findings of the study.

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

The context of TESOL practicum has been concernedly shifted from the Inner to the Expanding Circle setting. Back to the 1990s, the focus of TESOL practicum was tremendously reflected in the Western context (Richard & Crookes, 1988; Polio & Wilson-Duffy, 1998; Liu, 1999); meanwhile, a large of amount of attention has been recently relocated in the Eastern context (Stoynoff, 1999, Atkinson et al., 2008, Canh, 2014; Yang, 2014). Such context shifting seems corresponding to an emerging literature reviews on Non-Native English Teachers (NNETs) perceptions and perspectives (Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Samimy, 2000; Llurda, 2006; Medgyes, 2012); in fact, many of which are classified as novice NNETs (Brinton & Holten, 1989; Llurda, 2005 ; Bernat, 2008)

With regards to the concern of adjusting characteristics of novice NNETs into a set of requirements for learning how to teach, TESOL practicum has been recognized for its convenience as a useful means to assess teaching performance via a set of standards. Although one set of standards might make assessment task time-saving and cost-benefit, there are reasons for concerning about the establishment of standards for TESOL practicum. First, much consideration has been given to the detrimental effects upon novice teacher candidates who do not meet practicum standards for causing stresses during the practicum, or even leading them to become machinelike in the future career (MacDonald, 1993; Murray- Harvey; 2001; Goldstein, 2005; Sinclair, 2007). More importantly in teacher education, the typical division of standards into *content-based* and *performance-based* aspects (National Research Council, 1999) might be questioned with regards to quality, authenticity (Poole, 2000), and prospective beyond the assessment (Chung, 2008).

The next concern is about how to trace the quality, authenticity, and prospective for TESOL practicum. Previous studies on TESOL practicum aimed to discover certain aspects of the teaching practicum through different means. Qualitative instruments, such as journal writings and interviews, are employed to explore how non-native student teachers (NNSTs) reflect the concerns and hindrances in different stages of the TESOL practicum. For instance, NNSTs revealed in their journals and diaries their issues with confidence, linguistic, methodology, and culture (Brinton, 2004), and the tendency to depend on a teaching model rather than theories adaption and critical reflection on the process (Canh, 2014). Meanwhile, insights about NNSTs perceptions about TESOL practicum are found implicitly through the employment of quantitative methodology in the way that these findings are reported from the perspectives and assessments of the practicum supervisors (i.e. host teachers) on different sets of criteria: for instance, characteristics, language skill, and performance (Llurda, 2005), or teaching ability, professional skills, English usages in terms

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