

## Kurdish EFL Student Teachers' Perceptions Towards Their School-Based Teaching Practice Course

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### ABSTRACT:

Teaching practice holds paramount significance within the domain of teacher education and training, providing student teachers with a tangible opportunity to acquire practical knowledge and firsthand experience in the dynamics of schooling and classroom pedagogy. This study set out to investigate the perceptions of EFL student teachers regarding the school-based teaching practice course in four colleges of education and basic education in Duhok province of the Kurdistan Region-Iraq. A combined qualitative and quantitative methodological approach was used to gather the research data. A paper and online questionnaire provided quantitative data from 132 participants, complemented by conducting semi-structured interviews with 16 student teachers. The results showed that the teaching practice experience was deemed ineffective and inadequate in preparing to become qualified EFL teachers. The results further revealed that the majority of the elements involved in the topic being studied were deemed unsatisfactory and there were multiple areas for improvement in the phenomenon. The implications of these findings extend our understanding of the process and procedures of the teaching practice course in this specific context. The findings presented add to our understanding of the various aspects of the subject. The research has the potential to inform policy decisions and practical interventions, thereby positively influencing the field and leading to tangible improvements. This study holds significant importance as it addresses a critical gap in existing research, shedding light on an area that has thus far been underexplored. A significant limitation of the current study is its exclusive focus on student teachers as the primary data collection subjects. Therefore, future research should consider investigating the perspectives of other stakeholders involved in the teaching practice, including university supervisors, school principals, representatives of English departments, the course developers, and focal persons.

**KEYWORDS:** EFL; student teachers; perceptions; teaching practice; Kurdistan region-Iraq

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A growing body of research shows that teaching practice is the most beneficial part of teacher training because it represents the very first steps and beginnings of a personal journey of becoming a teacher (Kee, 2012). It is highly unlikely that anyone involved in the field of teaching and teacher education would consider excluding practical experience from the program. It provides an opportunity for student teachers (STs) to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired during their academic studies in a real classroom setting. Teacher preparation programs and pre-university institutions in the area frequently place greater emphasis on classroom instruction compared to other essential elements of the TP course. Some of these vital components include the provision of well-defined guidelines, constructive feedback mechanisms, opportunities for reflective practices, evaluative criteria, chances for collaboration, and other influential factors that considerably affect both student learning outcomes and the overall effectiveness of instruction. Unfortunately, these aspects are often overlooked and undervalued, seen as mere requirements to be fulfilled rather than given proper consideration. This study aims to investigate these overlooked aspects of the course. The existing English language teaching (ELT) literature in the Kurdish milieu, especially in the specific area of study, has inadequately addressed the topic under scrutiny.

As a result, there is a lack of understanding and knowledge that could have contributed to the development of the course. Several researchers, including Vernez et al. (2014), Sofi-Karim (2015), Abdulrahman (2019), Haji (2019), Hamasaid and Saheb

(2020), and Brime and Amin (2020), have explored the subject in recent years. These research studies have been undertaken in locales within the Kurdistan Region-Iraq (KRI), other than the specific area currently under examination. They primarily focus on the challenges faced by student teachers during TP, thus leaving a gap in our understanding of the potential remedies to these challenges. Another identified gap pertains to the omission of mixed-methods approaches, like interviews and questionnaires, in the majority of these studies, posing a potential problem as it restricts a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomena by solely relying on single data sources or methodologies. The current study attempts to explore the STs' perceptions of various components of the TP in the province of Duhok, KRI.

In KRI, the course typically takes place in the second semester of the final year (4th year) of the teacher education program. It is a mandatory requirement and is estimated to last for a period of forty days in all public education institutions. Throughout this phase, STs are first assigned to cooperating schools, and then the school administrations assign them to certain classes where they are overseen by experienced cooperating teachers (CTs). STs from basic education institutions typically conduct their TPs in primary and intermediate (basic) schools. On the other hand, STs from colleges of education can choose to engage in practice teaching at either basic or high schools. The current research does not include TP and STs at high schools. During the course, the ST is supervised by a university supervisor (US) and a CT. The US is expected to make two visits to assess the ST's performance within the 40-day timeframe. This research paper begins with an introduction that

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provides the background and context of the study, presents the research question, outlines the objectives, and highlights the significance of the research. The literature review section offers a comprehensive analysis of existing research and theories, identifying gaps in the current knowledge.

The methodology section describes the chosen research design, data collection methods, sampling, and data analysis techniques. In the results and discussion section, findings are presented and discussed interprets the results in relation to the research question. The paper concludes with recommendations and conclusions that summarize key points, reiterates the research's importance, and offers concluding insights.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The TP course plays a pivotal role in the development and preparation of STs by providing them with practical experience, essential skills, and a deeper understanding of the teaching profession. The study on TP is extensive and multitude, offering insight into its relevance as well as the possible advantages it may offer (Darden et al., 2001; Seppala and Alamaki, 2003; Clarke and Collins, 2009; Gujjar et al., 2011; Vo et al., 2018). For example, it is recognized as a phase where STs begin to develop the essential abilities and beliefs necessary for success in the classroom (Darden et al., 2001) and where they are provided with valuable exposure to the realities of school life (Seppala and Alamaki, 2003).

Another advantage according to Evers (2004:1, cited in Tuli and File, 2009), the TP course provides a flexible link and emphasis on three key areas of learning: subject knowledge, professional knowledge, and the necessary information and skills for effective teaching. For Tuli and File (2009), TP is a means by the help of which STs can develop their understanding of the socio-cultural, political, and economic aspects underlying education, while also providing them with firsthand experience and knowledge of the public school environment and students. However, a well-structured TP, as highlighted by Vo et al. (2018), provides STs with invaluable opportunities to learn and enhance their teaching skills. Indeed, without adequate and proper planning, organization, and systematic structuring, none of the intended outcomes, including those mentioned above and others, can be effectively achieved.

The quality of a TP course is a pivotal aspect that can significantly impact the effectiveness of a teacher education program (Grudnoff, 2011). Taking this into consideration, research has emphasized that this course should not only be a requirement for a teaching certificate but also provide valuable teaching experience and networking opportunities for STs (Clarke and Collins, 2009). Thus, we may conclude that the quality of TP is not solely reliant on classroom teaching behavior and performance, but also on factors that extend beyond the classroom setting such as collaboration, feedback, or reflective practices. On top of that, inappropriate and inadequate implementation of one or more of these components may result in poor classroom performance of STs, thus minimizing the overall quality of the course.

In this respect, numerous studies have strived to explore the topic from different standpoints, with the overarching goal of enhancing the quality of the course. For example, in a recent investigation within the Kurdish context, Haji (2019) examined the perceptions of in-service Kurdish English teachers towards their prior pre-service teaching practice experiences. A qualitative research method, interviews, and supplementary documents were employed to discover the EFL student teachers' feelings towards the course. The results indicated that a significant portion of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with their practicum experience, characterizing it as brief,

inadequately structured, lacking practicality, and insufficient in scope. In another study in KRI, Sofi-Karim (2015) summarized the factors that contribute to poor preparation of STs during the course including the inadequacy of the practical training period in terms of duration, planning, organization, and supervision by university supervisors (USs) and CTs. In a relevant study conducted by Abdulrahman (2019), an examination was undertaken to explore the challenges encountered by EFL STs within the Department of English at the College of Basic Education, University of Sulaimani, during their TP. The research involved the distribution of a closed-ended questionnaire comprising 20 items to a cohort of 50 participants. The investigation revealed significant challenges in the STs' teaching experiences at basic schools, particularly concerning issues such as the motivation levels of the school students, the limited duration of the practicum period, the assessment conducted by supervisors, and the absence of adequate teaching technology. While these studies contribute to a valuable body of literature on many of the challenges faced in the field of TP, they appear to overlook potential strategies for effectively addressing these challenges.

The TP course comprises various elements and procedures, and its effectiveness is impacted by several factors. One of these influential elements is the amount, type, and quality of collaboration between different TP stakeholders. Research has shown that insufficient collaboration between universities and schools results in conflicting views on advice for STs during their practicum (Bartholomew and Sandholtz, 2009). Therefore, it is problematic that relationships and communication structures between schools and universities are often "left to chance" (Mattsson et al., 2011, p. 10). In a research by Sofi-Karim (2015) on English language teaching in Kurdistan. He observed that the lack of cooperation between CTs and USs had a detrimental impact on the EFL STs' preparation and that CTs were not well-informed and trained about their duties. Many Kurdish education practitioners hold the view that the current procedures of collaboration in KRI fall short of common standards and expectations.

Assessment is also an important aspect of TP as it enables observers to evaluate the progress and performance of STs. The evaluation is typically carried out by two groups: USs who visit schools regularly to oversee STs, and CTs who mentor and monitor the students on a daily basis (Crookes, 2003). In the Kurdish context, three groups of evaluators are involved in evaluating STs during their TP namely, university supervisors, head teachers, and cooperating teachers.

In conclusion, the TP course is crucial for the development and preparation of STs, providing practical experience, essential skills, and a deeper understanding of the teaching profession. However, the quality of TP is contingent upon factors such as collaboration, proper planning, organization, and supervision. Inadequate implementation and lack of collaboration can hinder the effectiveness of the TP, leading to suboptimal learning experiences for STs. Having examined the existing literature on TP courses and their effectiveness, the subsequent section outlines the research methodology employed to investigate the topic in question.

## 3. METHOD

### 3.1 Research questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:  
1. How do the STs perceive their school-based teaching TP course experience?  
2. What factors do they consider to have influenced the effectiveness of the TP experience?  
3. What recommendations do they propose to overcome the TP problems and enhance its quality?

### 3.2 The participants

The participants in this research were STs who were studying English teacher education programs at four colleges of education and basic education in the Duhok province of KRI. These STs were enrolled in a four-year bachelor's degree program specifically focusing on ELT. As part of their program, all of them participated in a 40-day teaching practicum course that took place from February to March during the 2021-2022 school year. To earn their Bachelor of Education in ELT, they needed to fulfill the program requirements and achieve a minimum score of 50% in each subject. The participants were chosen from a larger population that was divided into four groups based on the location of the colleges within the Duhok province. Out of the entire population, a total of 143 individuals opted to complete the questionnaire, whereas 16 of them willingly agreed to participate in the semi-structured interviews.

### 3.3 Research tools

#### 3.3.1 The questionnaire

For the present study, a closed-ended questionnaire was utilized as the data collection tool. The tool was adapted from previous literature, specifically referencing Ngoyun (2015) and Al-Qasmi (2017). To ensure its validity, the questionnaire underwent a thorough review and was approved by a panel of experts. The main focus of the questionnaire was to gather data on the perceptions of STs regarding their TP experiences. The questionnaire consisted of 11 closed-ended questions and was available in both paper and electronic formats. A total of 132 valid responses were collected from participants who completed either the paper or online version of the questionnaire.

#### 3.4 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used alongside as another crucial tool to collect data for the study. These interviews served the purpose of conducting a more in-depth exploration of the subject matter and gaining insights from the participants' perspectives. According to Cohen et al. (2012), interviews provide a valuable opportunity to understand the problem from different angles and viewpoints. Additionally, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the interviewer to guide the conversation toward topics that were most pertinent to the study, providing greater control over the discussion (Creswell, 2009). The use of the qualitative methodology in this research intends to give a comprehensive knowledge of the

participants' experiences with the school-based TP course (Klein and Myers, 1999). The interview questions were developed based on analysis of the questionnaire data, teaching practice literature, and the works of Nguyun (2015). The researcher's thesis supervisor provided guidance in drafting and refining the questions. Sixteen STs volunteered for the interviews, which were conducted between April and December 2022. The interviews lasted from 40 to 70 minutes and focused on five themes: the experience and effectiveness of the course, TP regulations and guidelines, support provided, collaboration, and recommendations for improving the course. Half of the interviews were conducted in the Kurdish language, and the English translations underwent a careful review by experts and the participants of the interviews. Recordings were made using multiple devices and backed up on an external hard drive.

### 3.5 Data analysis

The computation of the quantitative data was made by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics were computed for each statement in the questionnaire, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The questionnaire items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The use of a 5-point Likert scale allowed for a more precise understanding of the participants' viewpoints, and the mean values were calculated by rounding the numbers. The following scheme shows how the groups' opinions are shown according to the mean: from 0 - 1.81 = strongly disagree, 1.81 - 2.60 = disagree, 2.61 - 3.40 = neutral, 3.41 - 4.20 = agree, 4.21 - 5 = strongly agree. The data from the interviews were transcribed, coded, categorized, and then subjected to content and thematic analysis using the software program data analysis tool (MAXQDA 2022).

Now that we have examined the methodology employed in this study, let us turn our attention to the findings. In this section, we will present the results and outcomes obtained from the data analysis.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study pertaining to the research inquiry concerning the perspectives of Kurdish EFL STs on TP at their school, as gleaned from both the questionnaire and interview data. TP experience and effectiveness

In this section, the findings derived from both the questionnaire and interviews are presented focusing on the participants' perceptions regarding the TP experience and effectiveness. **Table 1** frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation of the STs' perceptions related to the TP experience.

Statements	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		M	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1. The TP course is challenging and frustrating.	50	28%	17	13%	65	49%	3.04	1.19
2. The TP is effective in preparing me to become a qualified English teacher.	90	68%	28	21%	14	11%	2.30	.880
3. I feel satisfied with the teaching environment at the school.	82	62%	24	18%	26	20%	2.48	1.05

The provided findings from the questionnaire and interviews shed light on the participants' satisfaction levels and perceptions regarding their TP experiences at cooperating schools. The

results indicate a mix of views among the participants. Around half of the respondents (49%) found the course challenging, while a smaller but significant number (approximately 38%)

expressed contentment and found it helpful. However, a majority of the participants (66%) did not believe that the TP effectively prepared them to become professional English language teachers. The opinions regarding the teaching environment at schools were also divided, with around two-thirds (62%) finding it unconvincing and only a minority (18%) considering it convenient.

The interview findings align with the questionnaire results. Out of the 16 participants interviewed, a third felt that the course helped them develop their professional identities, citing reduced fear, practicality, and envisioning their future teaching career. However, a comparable number of participants considered the effectiveness of the course to be relative or even ineffective. Some participants highlighted the limitations of the TP, such as inadequate time and support to develop teaching skills and dissatisfaction with the quality of English instruction.

More than half of the interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the school-based TP, particularly regarding aspects of learning and teaching. They felt that the process did not meet their expectations, and the quality of English instruction was

perceived to be low. Constraints on utilizing their own teaching styles and limited cooperation between the university and schools were also mentioned.

Overall, while some participants reported positive outcomes and effective preparation for their teaching careers, a significant portion expressed reservations about the effectiveness of the TP in shaping their teaching abilities. Dissatisfaction with the teaching environment at cooperating schools was also prevalent. These

findings suggest the need for improvements in the TP course to better address the participants' needs and expectations. These results are consistent with previous research by Vo et al. (2018), highlighting the importance of proper implementation, cooperation, and support in enhancing the effectiveness of the TP.

#### 4.2 Regulations and Guidelines

In this section, the findings derived from both the questionnaire and interviews are presented, focusing on the participants' perceptions regarding the regulations related to the TP.

**Table 2**  
*frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation of the STs' perceptions related to regulations*

Statements	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		M	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1. The TP is a crucial part of the English language teacher education.	1	1%	8	6%	123	93%	<b>4.40</b>	.640
2. The school-based TP course has clear aims and vision.	96	73%	19	14%	17	13%	2.35	.801
3. My role as a ST is well identified in the TP.	106	80%	15	11%	11	9%	2.21	.752
4. The length of the TP is appropriate.	101	77%	10	8%	21	16%	2.30	.955
5. The timing of the TP is appropriate.	99	75%	21	16%	12	9%	2.10	.898
6. The assessment process of the STs during TP is fair.	47	36%	31	24%	54	41%	<b>3.08</b>	1.24

The participants in the study strongly recognized the importance of the practical course (TP) in teacher education, with 93% rating it highly on a Likert scale. The interview responses further supported this finding, emphasizing the value of hands-on experience in real classrooms. However, the data revealed dissatisfaction with the guidelines, timing, and duration of the TP, as well as concerns about the evaluation process. The Lack of written regulations and guidelines for TP was a common issue across institutions, leading to confusion and challenges in achieving TP objectives. Both the questionnaire and interview findings indicated that the timing and duration of the TP were deemed unsuitable and insufficient. Previous research also highlighted structural deficiencies and the briefness of hands-on experience in the practicum.

Communication and guidance regarding STs' roles and responsibilities were found to be insufficient, focusing mainly on how to deliver lessons and maybe deal with students. Inconsistency in expectations and roles limited STs' opportunities for growth and participation in school-related events. The assessment process was reported to be troubled and unfair, with inconsistencies in evaluation by USs and school principals. Observations often occurred late in the TP period, limiting the comprehensive understanding of STs' development.

#### 4.3 Support provided

In this section, the findings derived from both the questionnaire and interviews are presented, focusing on the participants' perceptions regarding the support provided.

**Table 3**  
*frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation of the STs' perceptions related to the support provided for STs*

Statements	Disagree		Neutral		Agree		M	SD
	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%		
1. I have received adequate support from my college and supervisor.	87	66%	32	24%	13	10%	2.22	.975
2. I have received adequate support from the host school and the school teacher.	54	41%	34	26%	44	33%	2.96	1.29

The data shows that participants were more satisfied with the assistance they received from CTs and schools compared to college and USs. Out of the participants, 87 reported not

receiving enough support from supervisors, while only 13 felt adequately supported by them. About 32% (44 participants) found the support from CTs and schools to be adequate,

whereas 42% (54 participants) expressed dissatisfaction. Additionally, 26% (34 participants) were uncertain about the level of support they received.

Based on the data from the interviews, participants were hesitant to label their college and USs as unsupportive, but they recognized that the support they received was insufficient in practice. The support from USs primarily consisted of feedback during assessment visits and their willingness to assist when asked. However, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the limited effectiveness of this support, as it often occurred on the last day of TP, making it impractical to benefit from the feedback provided. Despite the overall trend of dissatisfaction, there were individual cases where participants felt they received more support from their USs compared to their CTs or schools. This suggests that experiences varied among participants.

The college support was found to be mainly focused on administrative tasks, such as facilitating school changes when requested. More than half of the participants mentioned this administrative support. However, in one case, two participants felt let down when their US promised to help resolve an issue with the school principal but did not follow through, indicating a lack of support beyond administrative matters. This highlights the need for the colleges and USs to play a more active role in providing guidance and support throughout the TP, going beyond administrative tasks.

Regarding the school's support, it primarily revolved around administrative responsibilities like class and teacher allocations, creating timetables, and determining the number of classes to teach each week. Participants found CTs to be the most helpful in terms of guidance and support during their TP. CTs played a key role in helping participants develop lesson plans, improve teaching skills, and were available to answer questions and provide feedback on their progress. The school also provided teaching materials, handbooks, and occasional teaching aids and audio speakers. However, some participants claimed that in certain cases, the school did not provide any assistance and instead exploited them. This points to a fundamental issue with the current state of the TP course, as it fails to offer necessary support and guidance to participants. It is concerning that some participants perceive the TP as merely a means to an end rather than a valuable learning opportunity, as it may lead to a lack of motivation and investment in their teaching careers.

Many participants mentioned establishing positive and beneficial relationships with their CTs and school staff. These relationships can enhance the TP experience, provide networking opportunities, and contribute to professional development. However, it is important to recognize that other factors also influence the experiences of participants, such as the quality of teacher education programs, the adequacy of support and resources provided, and the availability of opportunities for reflection and feedback.

In conclusion, while participants appreciated the support and guidance from CTs and school staff, there is a need for comprehensive support from college and USs, as well as improvements in the TP course to ensure a valuable learning experience for participants. Genuine support that is followed through with action is essential for the success of participants during their TP.

#### 4.3.1 Provision of feedback

Feedback is crucial as it is the primary form of support that should be offered to STs throughout their TP. However, the data collected from interviews suggest that there are issues with the frequency, variety, and quality of feedback provided. Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with the feedback from USs, particularly due to its infrequency and timing, often occurring on the last day of the program. This limited the practical benefit they could derive from it. It is worth noting that while all participants were observed at least once, not all USs

provided post-observation meetings or feedback. This lack of feedback can hinder the development and growth of STs, as they miss the opportunity to reflect on their practice and receive guidance for improvement. Less than one-third of participants expressed contentment with the quality and content of the feedback, while more than half perceived it as insufficiently informative and too brief. This lack of specificity makes it challenging for trainees to understand areas for improvement. Similar findings have been observed in previous research, indicating the negative impact of insufficient direction from CTs and USs. The majority of participants did not receive feedback from school principals during the TP, further limiting their opportunities for guidance. Regarding feedback from CTs, around two-thirds of participants received feedback, while one-third did not receive any, with some trainees expressing frustration about their CTs' lack of involvement. This indicates a need to prioritize the learning and teaching skills of STs rather than solely focusing on assessment and grading. There is a clear need for improvement in providing meaningful feedback to support trainees' development and ensure they are well-prepared for their future roles. These findings are in line with those of Lingam (2002), who found that the absence of direction by CTs and USs was one of the most significant factors influencing student-teachers negatively. This study's findings also align with the research conducted by Haji (2019), which revealed that USs and CTs' feedback was perceived as inadequate, impersonal, and evaluative, leading to dissatisfaction among participants.

Inadequate and untimely follow-up by colleges and supervisors raised concerns among STs, suggesting a need for better communication and collaboration among stakeholders. Lack of proper follow-up and mentoring could lead to confusion and degradation of TP quality. Clear guidelines and effective follow-up mechanisms are crucial to ensure all stakeholders fulfill their responsibilities.

#### 4.3.2 Reflection opportunities

Engaging in reflection on one's teaching is of significant importance for STs during their teaching practicum as it allows them to identify errors and enhance their teaching expertise. Based on the interview data, participants considered feedback from evaluating stakeholders as the most accessible form of reflection. However, this feedback was often irregular, unsystematic, brief, and lacking depth. Self-reflection received minimal attention from supervising partners, with limited guidance or encouragement provided, except for a few university instructors who mentioned online resources without providing citations. Despite the lack of formal support regarding reflection, a few participants employed self-initiated techniques such as Googling and using YouTube tutorials to address teaching challenges. Some also engaged in observation, feedback, and sharing experiences with fellow STs, although collaboration among peers was limited. Collaborative efforts and feedback from peers were seen as valuable for introspection. To improve this aspect, university stakeholders may consider sending STs to cooperating schools in teams, with explicit guidelines for working collaboratively through regular meetings and classroom visits to observe, critique and provide constructive feedback.

The study found that one participant used a unique method of reflection by taking notes on classroom events and using them in future lessons. However, the practice of self-assessment and reflection was not part of the official teaching plans nor encouraged by supervisors. Those who engaged in self-reflection did so independently without guidance from school or USs. These findings are consistent with prior research by Mwamakula (2020), which suggested that STs frequently struggle with practical reflection skills during their TP, leading to challenges in developing their professional identity and self-

confidence. This shows that there is a lack of emphasis on self-reflection and self-assessment within the TP. It indicates that supervisors and teaching plans may not adequately address the importance of reflecting on teaching experiences to enhance professional growth and improve teaching effectiveness.

In summary, while the findings of this study may differ from research in other contexts, they align with conclusions drawn from previous studies conducted by researchers within the Kurdish context (Abdulrahman, 2019; Hamasaid and Saheb, 2020; Brime and Amin, 2020; Haji, 2019, Vernez et al.,2014).

#### 4.4 Collaboration

The research attempted to find out the STs' perceptions of collaboration within the TP triad and between the university/college and the school. The study revealed that communication between the college and the school mostly revolved around administrative tasks such as exchanging written correspondence and coordinating ST placements at schools. STs reported minimal interaction with USs, with contact occurring only during observation visits. In contrast, stronger collaboration was observed between STs and CTs, with positive feedback regarding their support and respectfulness. However, some STs experienced suboptimal collaboration with CTs, falling short of expectations. These findings align partially

with that of Farrel (2008), who identified inadequate collaboration and feedback from the CTs in Singapore.

The study revealed that most STs had limited collaboration with school principals, with minimal interaction beyond observation visits. A minority of STs reported strong collaboration with HTs, characterized by trust and autonomy in TPs. The study also highlighted a case where a CT's absence led to the ST assuming a teaching role with considerable authority, indicating collaboration with the HT. These findings align, in part, with Haji's (2019) study, which identified a lack of collaborative practices among TP stakeholders.

Overall, the study revealed bound collaboration within the TP triad and between the university/college and the school. Limited interaction was reported between STs and USs, while stronger collaboration was observed between STs and CTs. These findings highlight the importance of fostering effective collaboration among all TP participants, particularly between USs and CTs, to support the development of STs as future educators.

#### 4.5 Suggestions for improvement

The following table summarizes the findings regarding the ways to improve and deal with the concerns of STs related to the TP course.

Theme	Sub-theme	Sample extracts
Regulations	Clear/written guidelines/regulations Rigid implementation of regulations Change TP timing TP to be longer and more frequent Conduct induction sessions Reconsider assessment methods	“There should be clear guidelines and regulations for all the stakeholders STs, CTs and USs telling them what is expected from them, roles and responsibilities.” (ST1) “The teaching practice should be more frequent; the more the better.” (ST14)
School-based TP (experience)	More importance to ELT Regular observations by CTs Using technology More roles and responsibilities for STs More comfortable and supportive physical/learning classroom environment STs to Observe different teachers/classes	“The US visits should be more regular and frequent.” (ST1) “The HT should provide feedback and be more flexible with the STs.” (ST14) “The school, college and university supervisors need to be more supportive of STs.” (ST3)
Support provided	Providing teaching aids More follow up by USs/ College Better treatment by the school	“The school, college, and university supervisors need to be more supportive of STs.” (ST3) “There should be more follow-up by the college and the USs of the STs.” (ST11)
Collaboration	Regular collaboration between the TP triad More collaboration between CTs & USs	“There should be a stronger collaboration between the teaching practice triad and other stakeholders.” (ST1)
Feedback	More quality feedback by CTs, USs and HTs Extend the duration of sessions	“Providing and collecting feedback from the TP triad which will help in the future” (ST14)
Reflection opportunities	Systematic feedback	“I think there should be more feedback so that we reflect and know our mistakes.” (ST16)

These findings agree with those of Gürsoy (2013) who suggested modifying the TP course to include more feedback sessions involving CTs, supervisors, and STs together, facilitating mutual learning, extending the feedback time to provide pre- and post-feedback sessions for STs, incorporating reflective practice into the TP course, allowing STs to reflect-in-action and on-action, giving feedback in a non-directive and non-prescriptive manner, increasing the number of STs' observations, considering their limited time and heavy teaching load, and finally, revising the duration of TP to commence earlier and provide more teaching experience. They are also in line with Darling-Hammond et al. (2002) who suggested incorporating more systematic and connected clinical experiences, extending the course to a one-year field experience, and STs' being closely supervised and guided by CTs and USs so as to produce effective and prepared future

teachers. The findings also agree with Gujjar et al.'s (2011) ideas which called for fostering self-awareness and a deeper understanding of STs roles and responsibilities as it leads to a stronger connection with the teaching culture. There also is a correspondence between what this study found and the argument made by Grudnoff (2011) who called for a more holistic and collaborative structural approach based on shared understandings of roles, responsibilities, and expectations among universities, schools, and STs.

Overall, the study revealed mixed perceptions of the TP experience and effectiveness. Participants expressed concerns about regulations, support provided, feedback, reflection opportunities, and collaboration. To address these concerns, suggestions were made for clearer guidelines, improved collaboration, comprehensive support, meaningful feedback, and emphasis on self-reflection and self-assessment. Having

discussed the participants' perceptions, concerns, and suggestions regarding the TP program, the next section will delve into the recommendations and conclusions of the study.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section of this research provides a summary of the key insights and findings discussed in the preceding sections. It aims to distill the information presented and offer practical recommendations for individuals, institutions, and policymakers to navigate the topic effectively.

### 5.1 Conclusions

The main aim of this research was to investigate how STs perceived the supervision process by university and school stakeholders while undergoing their TP at cooperating schools in KRI. The results obtained from both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the supervisory process is of low quality and inadequate and requires improvement. The majority of participants recognize the importance of the TP and the value of gaining hands-on experience in a real classroom setting. However, there is also a wide range of dissatisfaction with the guidelines related to the TP vision and aims, the identification of STs' roles and responsibilities, the timing, and the duration of the course. The course was unsatisfactory for more while a majority did not feel that it adequately equipped them for their future careers as professional English language teachers. Most participants were dissatisfied with their TP experience and felt the course had failed to assist them in identifying their professional identities and prepare them to become qualified English teachers. The support provided was not up to the expected level of the participants particularly on the part of the university level; there is a lack of collaboration between the supervising stakeholders particularly between the university and the school on the one hand and between USs and CTs on the other; the feedback provided especially that by the USs and HTs was insufficient, consistent and effective and finally, there was a scarce of reflection opportunities particularly self-reflection opportunities.

This study has a number of limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the findings may not be generalizable to the larger population of Kurdistan due to contextual factors, despite similarities in regulations and procedures. Another limitation is the lack of investigation into STs' opinions of the pre- TP, which could have provided valuable insights into their personal attitudes towards the course and shed light on whether these factors contribute to their difficulties and negative experiences. Additionally, the research exclusively centered on student teachers as the primary subjects for data collection, potentially restricting the generalizability of the findings. Hence, conducting further research in this area would be advantageous. It is recommended that additional research be conducted to explore STs' perceptions of the learning and teaching environment within the classroom. Moreover, future studies could include other TP stakeholders such as university and school administrators, as well as supervisory staff from both entities, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon from different angles.

### 5.2 Recommendations

This section outlines the proposed solutions recommended by both the participants and the researcher to address the challenges and improve the standard of the TP course. It is essential to provide adequate and effective training for pre-service teachers during their TP course to ensure the development of competent and skilled generations of future teachers. To this end, it is important to have clear and written guidelines and regulations that must be strictly adhered to. In

addition, there should be a rigorous implementation of these regulations to ensure that each party is held accountable for their actions. The participants also suggested that the timing of TP should be reconsidered. It is recommended that TP be longer and more frequent and that induction sessions be conducted to prepare trainees for TP. A Reassessment of assessment procedures should be done to make them more relevant, reliable, and valid. Moreover, school-based TP should be given more importance through giving more roles and responsibilities and observation opportunities to STs; more effective supervision by CTs; getting use of technology in English lessons and establishing a more comfortable and supportive classroom environment.

Furthermore, it is strongly recommended to prioritize additional support measures, such as professional treatment and the provision of teaching aids by schools, as well as increased follow-up by higher learning. It is paramount to establish consistent collaboration among the TP triad, consisting of CTs, USs, and STs. Enhanced collaboration between CTs and USs ought to be encouraged. In addition, it is recommended to promote an educational approach that values critical and consistent feedback and reflective practices.

To enhance the quality of the TP, it is recommended that STs are encouraged to utilize reflection as a valuable tool. These reflections can be documented and organized into portfolios or journals, which can then be shared through the school's journal or an online platform managed by the college or its departments. This approach ensures easy accessibility for STs, USs and probably CTs. By implementing this strategy, STS can reap many benefits, including the opportunity to see and evaluate other STs' teaching practices and critically reflect on their own. It also promotes creativity and innovation, and facilitates meaningful discussions on teaching and practicum-related issues. Moreover, the active involvement of USs can facilitate the provision of constructive feedback, guidance, and practical solutions to enhance the performance and professional growth of STs. By implementing these changes, teacher training and development programs can be more effective in producing high-quality teachers who are equipped with the skills and knowledge to deliver excellent education to learners.

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