Chapter 13

Pre-Service English Teachers’ Perception of the Practicum Experience

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is to explore pre-service teachers’ perceptions of a school-based practicum experience as part of their training as future teachers. To achieve the goal of the research, a quantitative study is employed. The sample is composed of a total of 113 pre-service teachers studying the last year of the Degree in Primary Education: English ranging in age from 22 to 48. To operationalize the variables and collect the data, the researchers use a questionnaire. On analysing the results, the investigators highlight that pre-service teachers are quite satisfied with the experience, the majority of them consider this practice brings them the opportunity to observe the real context in which they will develop their future work, and to put into practice what they have acquired. The experience contributes to student empowerment in learning since they have the opportunity to manage different lessons and demonstrate their teaching skills.

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INTRODUCTION

School-based Practicum experiences are considered relevant components of any degree of teachers’ education (Hill & Brodin, 2004; Maphosa, Shumba & Shumba, 2007; Quick & Sieborger, 2005; Tang, 2003; Trent, 2013; Wilsom, 2006; Wright, 2010). There are many researches around the world in which these practicum experiences are considered a highly valued component of teachers’ training that build a bridge between theory and practice (Hill & Brodin, 2004; Liu, 2012; Perry 2004; Tuli & File). Even they are described as vital parts of the infant or pre-school, primary and secondary teacher education (Hamaidi, et al., 2014; Sabar, 2004; Zeichner, 2010).

The research carried out by Hamaidi, et al. (2014) also state the teaching-learning process that takes place through them is an essential component to provide pre-service teachers authentic opportunities to put into practice, in a real school context, what they have learned at university (Fajardo & Miranda, 2015; Majzub, 2013). As Morrison & Werf (2012) highlight theory without practice is empty; practice without theory is blind (p.1). Moreover, practicum experiences bring the pre-service teachers the possibilities to assess the contents acquire during the Degree, improve them through the experiential learning and discover their teaching skills that will help them in the development of their future career (Consuegra, Engels, & Struyven, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Tuli & File, 2009; Zeichner, 2010).

As Kaphesi (2013) points out these practicum experiences help pre-service teachers to develop a contextualised understanding of the process of teaching and acquire the skills to manage the classrooms. Smith & Lev-Ari (2005) added that these practices contribute to the development of positive attitudes of pre-service teachers towards their future profession and towards the pupils. They have the opportunity to work with different students, with several learning styles, in a variety of environments and give answer to their specific learning needs.

Another relevant aspect emphasize in the studies about practicum is the possibilities that these experiences offer to the future teachers to learn from specialists with a great background in education and interact with them (Wang, 2001). In addition, these specialists collaborate in the pre-service teachers’ training and bring them opportunities to interact and ask them the doubts about the programming of lessons, the use of teaching materials and resources, the management of time, the problem-resolution strategies that they will probably have to put into practice to solve problems in the future career, and the assessment of pupils’ learning (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018; Kemmis et al., 2014; Rakicioglu-Soylemez & Eroz-Tuga, 2014). It is established a close relationship between pre-service teachers and tutor teachers, creating the perfect atmosphere to even discuss about the practical teaching experiences in a quite positive environment.
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