

Arab Society of English Language Studies

From the Selected Works of Arab World English Journal AWEJ

Spring March 15, 2019

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Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/arabworldenglishjournal-awej/630/>

An EFL Teacher Education Programme: Issues and Concerns from a Yemeni University

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Abstract

Teacher education programmes (TEPs) promote unique experiences that involve a deep understanding of teaching needs, advanced strategies, preparation and training at universities or schools. The main objective of this study is to investigate the English teacher education programme (ETEP) in order to reform and develop current teaching practices in a rapidly developing area of research. The present study aims to look at three main areas which include the university preparation strategy, classroom teaching and supervisory support of an ETEP in Yemen. The data were collected through a questionnaire emailed to all the fourth-year student teachers of the English Department, Faculty of Education, at a public university in Yemen. The results reveal several issues concerning university courses, pedagogical practices, planning lessons, methodologies, and approaches. They disclose some inconsistencies between the proposed strategies at the university and the actual classroom implementation. The results also indicate that the present teaching duration is insufficient to realize the real benefits of the program for sustainable growth. The study provides some recommendations for student teachers, teachers, supervisors, curriculum designers, and policymakers.

Keywords: pedagogical practices, supervision, teacher education, teaching practice

Cite as: Al-Jaro, M. S., & Asmawi, A. (2019). An EFL Teacher Education Programme: Issues and Concerns from a Yemeni University. *Arab World English Journal*, 10 (1) 139 -154.
DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no1.13>

Introduction

Teacher education programmes (TEPs) are developed to equip student teachers with the necessary pedagogical skills and competencies to cope with issues they might encounter during their teaching practice experience (Cheng, Cheng, & Tang, 2010). Identifying these issues and concerns could lead to better preparation and training (Goh & Matthews, 2011; Mukeredzi & Mandrona, 2013) and eventually result in a successful teaching practice experience (Lawson, Çakmak, Gündüz, & Busher, 2015). That experience, or as it is sometimes called teaching practicum (Hyland and Lo, 2006; Farrell, 2008; Moody, 2009; Kabilan, 2013; Canh, 2014; Merç, 2015), is considered as the first step where student teachers can gain practical classroom experience and be trained to apply and implement theory and teaching ideas professionally (Gebhard, 2009) through the guidance of experienced supervisors.

One of the main goals TEPs is bridging the gap between theory and practice (Cheng et al., 2010; Endeley, 2014) where successful implementation of theory and teaching skills needs experienced teacher trainers to reflect the full benefits of the programme. Another aim is concerned with the quality of the student teacher's learning experience (Cabaroglu, 2014) which might be influenced by their prior training at the educational institution, teaching context, and the teacher education programme (Cheng et al., 2010). Additionally, the expert supervisors, who act as models for their supervisees have a great role in reshaping the professional identity of the student teachers. They can guide and provide them with usefully practical strategies for classroom management (Yazdanmehr & Akbari, 2015).

Literature review

A review of pertinent literature on the student teachers' teaching practice indicates that there are various issues facing the student teachers during practicum at schools among which are: classroom implementation, instructional proficiency, unexpected supervision, insufficient preparation, and fear of evaluation (Kyriacou & Stephens, 1999; Harwell & Moore, 2010; Azeem, 2011; Goh & Matthews, 2011). For instance, Kyriacou and Stephens (1999) identify some obstacles facing student teachers during practicum such as dealing with disruptive behaviour, inability to teach professionally, lack of planning skills, and insufficient preparatory teaching practice. Whereas in a different context, Harwell and Moore (2010) identify other issues with respect to the teaching practicum experience in the United States. Student teachers are concerned about their performance in the teaching practice, their interaction with supervisors, successful implementation, and the general benefit of the experience. Another actual concern which might affect the student teachers' teaching practice is insufficient preparation. This is highlighted in Azeem's (2011) study on the problems facing student teachers during teaching practice in Pakistan. Azeem reports that most student teachers are not trained to use different methods of teaching before they started teaching at schools. Likewise, Goh and Matthews (2011) identify four issues of teaching practicum in a Malaysian context. These are classroom management and student discipline, institutional and

personal adjustment, classroom teaching, and student learning. They stress the need to provide student teachers with techniques as well as strategies to overcome these issues. Additionally, Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) investigate the student teachers' teaching practice in a rural South African context by identifying the negative and positive experiences, and the different factors behind such experiences. They report a lack of staff and school administration support and guidance for the student teachers, and the only support they received is through the collaborative interaction with learners and peers.

In the field of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL), similar studies have been conducted to investigate issues, concerns, dilemmas and challenges encountered by student teachers during teaching practice. For example, Ali, Othman, and Karim (2014) address issues and concerns of twenty student teachers from a private university in Malaysia. They conclude that instructional practices, management, students' discipline, facilities and support, interaction with cooperating teachers and university supervisors affected the efficacy of the teaching practice experience. They also recommend these concerns to be acknowledged by the competent people, concerned stakeholders, and institutions for further development. In a like manner, Cabaroglu (2014) focuses on the dilemma that student teachers faced during their teaching practice. They necessitate a need for support to assist student teachers to deal with a variety of dilemmas which might lead to worse issues such as conflicts, frustration, tension, physical and emotional stress. Cabaroglu reveals that the mismatch between theory and practice is another problem which should be solved by context-specific solutions.

In summary, most of the student teachers' concerns are either relevant to the theory-practice disconnect, supervision, and evaluation, or initial preparation of TEPs. Teaching practice experience is an opportunity for student teachers to translate the educational theories they learned during preparation into actual classroom practices. Likewise, supervision is an essential element which assists student teachers in translating what they have learned in their theoretical views and methods into practice to improve their professional performance (Farrell, 2007). Furthermore, initial preparation plays a key role in shaping student teachers' teaching profile. Thus, great efforts should be exerted into improving teachers' proficiency as well as teaching performance to obtain the necessary changes on TEPs (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007) and contribute significantly to teacher quality in general (Endeley, 2014).

Background of the study

English language teaching in Yemen, the study context, is quite uncertain and requires extensive and continuous investigation. English is considered a foreign language in Yemen (Al-Ahdal, 2010; Al-Ezzi, 2012) where the Arabic language is the official language used as a medium of instruction at all levels. In schools, the English language is taught as a subject of the school curriculum that starts from the seventh grade in the primary education to the third grade in the secondary education

with an average of five classes a week (nearly 40 minutes per each class period). At the tertiary level, the English language is taught as a requirement in non-English departments (Bhooth, 2015).

In the last three decades, Yemen witnessed a rapid growth in the enrolment of school teachers into educational training institutions. Therefore, the government has given great attention to the TEPs in general and ETEP, in particular, to prepare and train teachers in different teacher education institutions in Yemen and meet the current development in various fields. These programmes are now offered by the Faculties of Education which are administered by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Muthanna & Karaman, 2011).

Almost hundreds of Yemeni EFL student teachers annually graduate from Faculties of Education to be teachers at primary and secondary schools. However, studies reported that in-service teachers lack the competence in the use of teaching methods and techniques (Zuheer, 2013) and experience theory-practice challenges during their classroom practices (Al-Musalami, 2011; Bataineh, Bataineh, & Thabet, 2011). Although these studies admitted the teachers' teaching weaknesses and recommended improvement in the teaching strategies, there is a lack of studies to investigate the initial preparation of those teachers and issues they might face during practicum at schools. Teaching practicum is a very important component in any teacher education programme (Farrell, 2007; Farrell, 2008; Canh, 2014) and is a substantial stage in reconstructing the teaching identity of student teachers (Gebhard, 2009). As a crucial part of TEPs, it is the student teachers' opportunity to gain practical experience and implement theory through the guidance of experienced supervisors. In addition, it offers an opportunity to develop student teachers' capabilities as well as teaching strategies and bridge the gap between theory and practice (Endeley, 2014). It is, therefore, crucial to investigate the issues and concerns of ETEP in Yemen.

Setting

English teacher education programme in Yemen aims to professionally prepare students to be teachers of English language at primary and secondary schools. It offers 49 courses related to teaching methods, language skills, English literature, Yemeni education and culture, and other relevant aspects taught in four years, eight semesters. Students must pass them to graduate with a bachelor's degree in education. In the first semester of the fourth year, the students must join nearby schools to start practising teaching the English language for one complete semester. They will be given an opportunity to teach in a real classroom under the guidance and supervision of four supervisors; two university supervisors, the cooperative teacher and the school headmaster who assist and assess these students' teaching performance. The student teachers can select the host primary or secondary public schools. Most of them usually select the nearest schools to their residences. Based on their preference, the practicum programme office will arrange with the Ministry of Education General Office to officially issue letters to the host schools to welcome the

student teachers and arrange their teaching schedule since they teach only three days a week. However, they must attend some classes at the university in the remaining two days of the week.

The Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this study is to address the issues facing the EFL student teachers during their teaching practice in a relatively under-researched setting. Understanding these issues and concerns specifically in the three main areas, i.e. university preparation, classroom implementation, and supervisory support could fill the gap in a locally situated research and provide rich data necessary for continuous improvement of ETEP. It could also provide insights into similar educational contexts, useful suggestions and valuable information for educators, programme directors, and decision makers. To achieve this aim, the study is guided by the following three questions:

1. What are the issues facing the EFL student teachers in terms of university preparation?
2. What are the issues encountered by the EFL student teachers in respect of the classroom implementation?
3. What are the issues faced by the EFL student teachers in respect of the supervisory support?

Methodology

Population and Sampling

The target population of the study was 62 fourth-year student teachers who were enrolled in the ETEP offered by the Department of English, Faculty of Education, at a public university in Yemen. They were 47 males and 15 females who completed their teaching practice experience at schools. They share the same cultural background, and their first language is Arabic. All the student teachers were emailed the data collection instrument because the entire finite population of the study is small (Creswell, 2005). They were provided with necessary instructions to complete the survey questionnaire and briefed on the study objectives. They were also informed that their participation is voluntary, and all information gathered will not be disclosed but only to be used for the study purposes. Additionally, they were ensured that their real names will not be revealed in the study findings. Therefore, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Forty-eight student teachers (35 males and 13 females) responded and returned back the questionnaires via email. Therefore, only those respondents constitute the study sample and they are 77.4% of the study population.

Data Collection

In the present study, the data were collected through a survey questionnaire emailed to all the fourth-year student teachers of the English Department, Faculty of Education, at a public university in Yemen after they had completed twelve weeks teaching practice at various schools. The survey questionnaire includes two sections. Section A is adapted from two surveys used by Harwell and Moore (2010) and Ali et al. (2014). It contains thirty items related to three main areas: (i) university preparation (7 items); (ii) classroom implementation (9 items); and (iii) supervisory support (14 items). The respondents are required to select the answer which best represents their view based

on a five-point Likert scale: '1' strongly disagree (SD), '2' disagree (D), '3' undecided (UD), '4' agree (A), and '5' strongly agree (SA). Section B has an open-ended question on issues and concerns which are not included in section A.

To maximize the validity of the study instrument, five experts from two English language teacher education training institutions were consulted about the instrument. They gave some suggestions on the instrument which were taken into consideration. The final draft of the survey questionnaire was then subjected to a "pilot test" (Creswell, 2005, p. 367). It was distributed to a group of 15 student teachers who had graduated from the same department. They were asked to respond to the survey questionnaire and comment on the clarity of the instrument instructions and the difficulty of questions if any. The purpose of this pilot test was mainly to identify and avoid the practical ambiguities that might face the target respondents. Thus, they will be able to complete the survey questionnaire without much difficulty. Based on the pilot group feedback, the instrument was modified. After ensuring that the instructions and all questions of the instrument were clear and unambiguous, it was emailed to the study participants.

It is worth noting here that the questionnaire was emailed as it is "a convenient way to reach a geographically dispersed sample of a population" (Creswell, 2005, p. 361). However, one limitation of this questionnaire in this study was that some questionnaires were not returned probably due to invalid e-mail addresses or lack of internet access, and only forty-eight completed questionnaires were emailed back to the researchers. Therefore, the response return rate was 77.4% which is considered relatively high to "create a stronger claim in generalizing results from the sample to the population" (Creswell, 2005, p. 367).

Data analysis

The data collected from the forty-eight student teachers who had responded were included in the final analysis. As the survey questionnaire comprised of two sections, the participants' responses to the first section (A) were statistically analysed using descriptive statistics via SPSS 20 software. The mean and standard deviation were computed for each statement. For the purpose of statistical analysis, each of the variables in the five-point Likert scale was coded as follows: AD '1', D '2', UD '3', A '4', and SA '5'. All the questionnaire statements were positive attributions and graded as 1-2-3-4-5. Therefore, according to Birisci, Metin and Karakas (2009) and Abedalaziz, Jamaluddin, and Leng (2013), the ranges of agreement in the questionnaire will be determined through the use of the formula $(n-1)/n$ after calculating the interval width of the range between 1 through 5 as 0.8. Table 1 below shows the range of statements in the questionnaire:

Table 1. *The range of statements*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1 - 1.80	1.81 - 2.60	2.61-3.40	3.41 - 4.20	4.21 - 5.00
Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high

As shown in Table 1, the interval width 1-1.80 indicates a very low level, 1.81-2.60 indicates a low level, 2.61-3.40 indicates a medium level, 3.41- 4.20 indicates a high level and 4.21-5.00 indicates a very high level of agreement with the items in the questionnaire. Therefore, items that score a mean of 3.41 and above are considered positive while the ones that score 2.60 and below are considered negative.

However, Section (B) of the instrument was analyzed qualitatively by reading the student teachers' written responses many times and analyzing them to generate codes. Then similar codes were classified under one family or category. The results were three broad themes emerging from this analysis which represented the issues and concerns other than those mentioned in section (A).

Results

Analysis of the EFL student teachers survey questionnaire reveals several issues and concerns related to university preparation, classroom implementation and the supervisory support faced by them during their teaching practice. Some other emerging issues were also developed from the open-ended question. The data analysis discloses the following results. They are presented according to the study questions:

Study Question 1: *What are the issues facing the EFL student teachers in terms of university preparation?*

Table 2. *Issues and concerns related to university preparation*

	Statement	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
1	What I learned at the university prepared me to plan my lessons well.	48	1.9167	0.96
2	What I learned at the university prepared me to teach skill focused content knowledge.	48	2.7083	1.16
3	What I learned at the university prepared me to utilize different teaching methods.	48	2.1875	1.06
4	Microteaching develops my teaching skills.	48	2.1875	0.98
5	Microteaching helps me get deeper knowledge regarding the art of teaching.	48	2.0417	.0.89
6	I feel I am more prepared to hold a teaching position after my teaching practice.	48	1.9692	0.73
7	Overall, I feel the teaching practice has been a beneficial component in my education.	48	4.0000	0.98
	Global Mean		2.4315	0.33

Table 2 highlights the mean scores for items related to the university preparation issues and concerns facing the student teachers. By comparing these scores with the scores in Table 1, there are five items (1,3,4,5 and 6) which are of the low level. The other two items are at a medium level and high level (2 and 7) respectively. The global mean score of these items is 2.4315 which indicates that the university preparation does not reach the required level to prepare the student teachers well. Although most of the student teachers admitted the importance of teaching practicum and its benefits for their education, they indicated poor university preparation as their

main concerns and issues. They expressed insufficient input that would have enabled them to plan their lessons well, teach skill focused content knowledge, and utilize different teaching methods. That is also supported by their responses on microteaching which, to them, does not really satisfy their need to develop their teaching skills and get more in-depth knowledge regarding the art of teaching. Consequently, the participants felt not well prepared to hold a teaching position after their teaching practice experience.

Study Question 2: *What are the issues encountered by the EFL student teachers in respect of the classroom implementation?*

Table 3. *Issues and concerns related to classroom implementation*

N.	Statement	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
8	I learned a lot by observing and talking to other teachers during my teaching practice.	48	4.3750	0.73
9	I was able to discipline my class easily during my teaching practice.	48	1.8125	.086
10	Teaching practice gave me clear guidance for planning to teach.	48	2.0833	1.48
11	Teaching practice developed my teaching strategies/skills.	48	4.4792	0.71
12	I can easily implement what I learned while teaching.	48	1.9375	1.01
13	I was full of anxiety at the beginning of my teaching practice.	48	4.1250	0.98
14	I felt more confident to teach after my teaching practice.	48	4.2083	1.07
15	I was asked to complete evaluation forms about my teaching practice.	48	1.8333	0.90
16	I was asked to keep notes and diaries about my teaching practice experience.	48	2.2500	1.08
Global Mean			3.0116	0.33

Table 3 illustrates the mean scores of the items 8-16 that identifies issues and concerns related to the student teachers' classroom implementation. Four items (8, 11, 13, and 14) scored very high, while five items (9, 10, 12, 15, and 16) scored very low. Student teachers were unable to handle their classes effectively, to give clear guidance for planning to teach (items 9 and 10) and to implement what they had learnt while teaching (item 12). Besides, they were not asked to complete evaluation forms or to keep notes and diaries about their teaching practice experience (items 15 and 16). The global mean of all items 3.0116 indicates that the overall level of the student teacher' classroom performance is medium which implies the need for exposing them to the necessary strategies for planning lessons and managing the classroom. Besides, they should be encouraged to reflect on their teaching practice as it is helpful to recall the gained knowledge,

make different informed choices based on different practised situations (Akbari, 2007) and significantly improve their teaching quality (Liu, 2012).

Study Question 3: *What are the issues faced by the EFL student teachers in respect of supervisory support?*

Table 4. *Issues and concerns related to supervisory support*

	Statement	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
17	I feel comfortable being observed by university supervisors.	48	2.9583	1.36
18	My cooperating teacher gave constructive criticism after I worked with students that helped me gain a better understanding of the teaching process.	48	2.0833	1.12
19	My cooperating teacher provided useful guidance prior to my teaching a lesson.	48	1.9583	0.98
20	My cooperating teacher provided opportunities for me to expand my knowledge base by allowing me to experience a variety of instructional situations and work with diverse groups of students.	48	2.0833	1.02
21	My university supervisors often offered me helpful advice relative to my individual teaching practice.	48	3.5833	1.02
22	My university supervisors offered me helpful suggestions related specifically to instructional or methodological issues.	48	3.9583	0.98
23	My university supervisors gave me constructive criticism after I worked with students that helped me gain a better understanding of the teaching process.	48	2.6667	1.07
24	My university supervisors provided me with useful guidance prior to my teaching a lesson.	48	2.0833	0.96
25	My university supervisors consistently supported me during my teaching practice.	48	1.8958	0.90
26	The school headmaster often offered me helpful advice relative to my individual teaching practice.	48	2.7292	1.26
27	I felt comfortable discussing any problems with the school headmaster that might have arisen during the teaching practice.	48	3.1042	1.37
28	The cooperating teacher's observations help me in improving my teaching practice.	48	2.4167	1.10
29	The university supervisors' observations help me in improving my teaching practice.	48	2.5625	1.21
30	The supervisors' observations are enough to support me in my teaching practice.	48	1.8542	0.92
	Global Mean		2.5670	0.40

Table 4 shows the mean scores of the issues and concerns related to supervisory support. Items 17-30 highlight the supervision issues and concerns facing the student teachers during

teaching practice. Only three items (21, 22, 27) scored a high mean, three items (17, 23, 26) scored a medium means, while eight items (18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30) scored a low mean. Student teachers were not provided with enough guidance before teaching and did not receive effective criticism after teaching from their cooperating and university supervisors (items 2, 3, 4, 8, 9). In addition, they were not satisfied with the supervisory observations (item 28, 29), and the number of observations was not enough to support them during their teaching practice (item 30). The global mean came up to 2.5670 which is negative, indicating that interaction with supervisors during teaching practice is not enough, and the support received is limited. A closer look at the results shows that the university supervisors offered helpful advice and better suggestions (items 21, 22) compared to the school headmaster (item 26). Thus, some student teachers felt uncomfortable discussing problems encountered with the school headmaster (item 27).

Other issues and concerns

The student teachers reported several issues and concerns they faced during their teaching practice experience in their responses to Section B of the questionnaire. Figure 1 shows the reported issues and concerns that were not captured in section A. Three broad themes were identified with classroom challenges as their major issue of concern followed by pedagogically related problems and limited supervisory support. Other issues were also mentioned by student teachers; however, they were already highlighted and discussed in section A. Therefore, they are termed as “Others” in Figure 1.

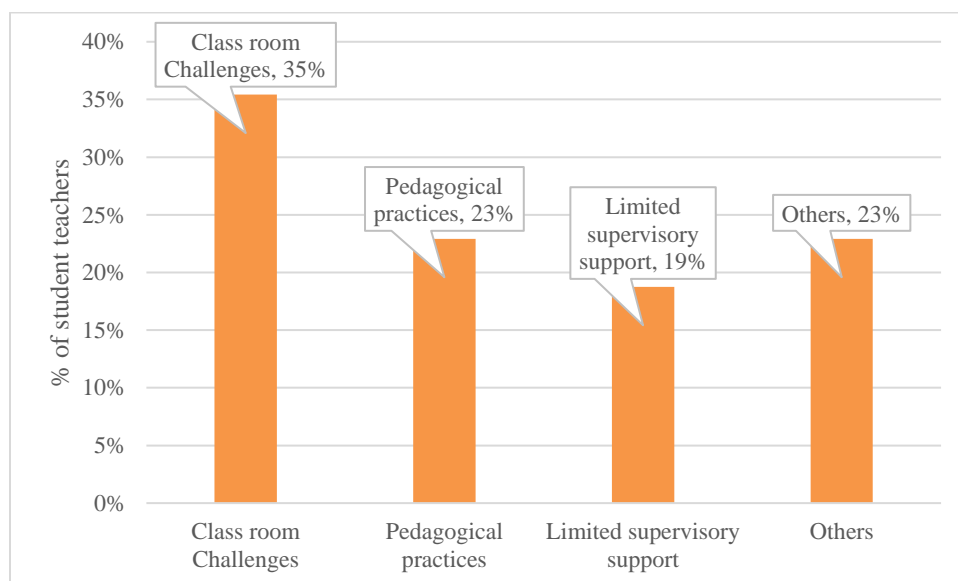


Figure 1. Open-ended question responses by student teachers

Classroom Challenges

Most of the student teachers expressed their enthusiastic feelings at the beginning of their teaching practice to have this shift in their educational lives. However, they encountered some challenges during their teaching practice which included the conflicts between their ideal vision of language teaching and learning, and the reality of school life. In fact, they experienced a "reality shock" (Farrell, 2003) when they tended to implement what they had studied at the university. For

instance, student teacher A described her excitement to be a teacher at the beginning of practice, but she was later disappointed with the school system. She added:

I found a completely different situation. The school administration did not allow me to practice different classroom activities and innovative ideas to encourage my students to participate which made me hate the school system.

Another important issue was reported by student teacher B. She was frustrated by the big gap between the theoretical part and the real classroom practice. She wrote:

Then during my teaching practice, I was shocked because of the big gap between what I have studied and the classroom real teaching. It was a big challenge I have experienced, so I was really frustrated.

Additionally, some student teachers faced other challenges that hindered their teaching performance such as a large number of classes, low proficiency in English and students' negative attitude towards studying the English language which complicated their teaching task. For instance, a student teacher C mentioned some of the difficulties he faced during his teaching practice. He wrote:

As I started my teaching practice, I faced some difficulties in presenting the lesson and dealing with pupils. There were many pupils in the class, and most of them had a negative attitude towards studying the English Language. They usually told me that they hate English subject.

Another student teacher D reported that students had a difficulty to understand her when she spoke in English. She added:

One problem I faced while teaching practice was the students' low proficiency in English. I usually use the English language in the classroom, but my students did not understand me. And they were usually asking for translation in their first language (Arabic) which was time-consuming.

Pedagogical Practices

Around 23% of the student teachers raised some issues and concerns related to their pedagogical practices; such as planning lessons, classroom management, school facilities, and practicum duration. For example, the student teacher D indicated that she could not plan her lesson well and cover what had been planned during the class period. She claimed: "I could not control the time of the class period because I wanted to explain all my lesson parts for only 35 minutes which were not enough to cover everything"

A similar issue was reported by the student teacher, C. He said, "I could not organize myself well. When I prepared my lessons, I did not know how to follow the plan to transfer the information and ideas to the pupils. I do not know, maybe I need more training". Likewise, student teachers faced difficulty in managing their classes. For instance, a student teacher, E admitted:

Teaching is not an easy task as people think. For me, it was very difficult. I could not control the class because I had more than 40 students who usually were making noises during my classes.

Another student teacher, F also indicated that the late classes affected her teaching class and it was a cause of noising among learners. She justified that by:

Because all my teaching classes were scheduled at the end, and the students at that time were tired, hungry, and absent-minded. Therefore, most of them made noises by moving their feet and chairs on the floor as a sign to dismiss the class

Besides, some student teachers were concerned about school facilities. They claimed that the host schools did not provide them with necessary visual aids for presenting their lessons well. One student teacher, G voiced:

There is a shortage of visual aids in the school. There is no English language laboratory to teach students English sounds and listening skills. I used only the cassette recorder or MP4 recorded to let the student listen to the native or native-like speakers

In addition, some student teachers expressed that the teaching practicum duration was relatively short because some schools ended the term earlier that year due to the political turmoil in the country. Thus, they could not follow their plans. For example, the student teacher H wrote: "The practicum period was not quite enough (only 8 weeks), and I could not cover all the syllabus that I am supposed to complete. Some lessons were left (untaught)".

Limited supervisory support and feedback

Although the student teachers were supervised by a panel of four supervisors, they expressed some issues regarding the received support and feedback from their supervisors. Overall, they claimed that they did not receive sufficient support and feedback from their supervisors and the number of observations was inadequate. One student teacher wrote about this problem: "My cooperative teacher observed my teaching class only once because he had a heavy teaching schedule (20 classes per week). Therefore, he could not observe my teaching performance many times" (A reported).

Another student teacher, J expressed her disagreement with the assigned cooperating supervisor. She explained:

There are three teachers of English at the school I practised in, but the school administration assigned the inexperienced one to be my cooperative teacher. I wished I could change him. He did not provide me with useful guidance on my lesson planning and teaching.

The student teacher, C also indicated that he could not communicate and receive feedback from his cooperating teacher as he was always busy with teaching classes. It seemed that the supervisory support was inconsistent and inadequate as the teaching practice was carried out concurrently with cooperating teachers' teaching classes at schools and with university supervisors' lectures at the faculty. Thus, the expected support and feedback on the student teachers' teaching practice were limited and affected their performance.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the issues and concerns encountered by EFL student teachers during their teaching practice in terms of university preparation, classroom implementation, and supervisory support. Results show that the student teachers were discontented with several issues related to practicum preparation and supervision which consequently influenced their real classroom implementation and reduced the effectiveness of the ETEP.

The student teachers in this study indicated that they did not receive enough input to enable them to plan their lessons well and articulate what they planned to teach through implementing different teaching methods. Thus, they practised a theory-practice gap which limited their teaching performance. Similarly, in line with the findings of Ali et al. (2014), the student teachers admitted the lack of university courses as they faced issues with lesson planning. They were also confused to plan different class activities to engage their students in the learning process. This is consistent with the findings set forth by Canh (2014) that the EFL teacher education programme did not provide student teachers with basic teaching skills to experience a useful and professional teaching practice.

Overall, most of the study participants expressed that the teaching practice developed their teaching strategies and skills; however, some encountered difficulty in implementing what they learned during the teaching practice. The first part of this result is in congruence with the findings of Harwell and Moore's (2010) study that the practicum experience helps the student teachers become more prepared to deal with classroom teaching. Whereas, the second part comes in line with Cabaroglu's (2014) work which revealed that the student teachers experienced a problem to implement what they had studied during their practice at the traditional school setting. However, the result is inconsistent with the findings of Ali et al. (2014) that the student teachers' preparation is influenced by some factors such as insufficient input and the limited supervisory support which negatively affect their teaching performance. Similarly, results showed that most of the student teachers were not asked to complete evaluation forms nor they were requested to keep notes and diaries on their teaching practice. They were unaware of the effectiveness of reflection and how it could help them to "respond to the dynamics of the lesson and contextual changes" (Canh, 2014, p. 217) and manage various challenges and issues that might face them during teaching practice (Farrell, 2016)

In sum, the results indicated that the student teachers received limited supervisory support and feedback, had a short teaching practice duration, and a minimal number of observations which may affect their teaching practice quality. These results support the findings of Endeley (2014) that highlight the importance of the supervision and duration of teaching practice. Thus, student teachers might not acquire adequate competencies if one of these components is weak and consequently, such inadequacies "will affect the quality of the exercise" (p. 157).

Conclusion

In this study, EFL student teachers report several issues and concerns during their teaching practice that are related to insufficient preparation and inadequate supervisory support. Therefore, the ETEP in the context of this study fails to prepare the student teachers professionally and adequately to move from the training context to real classroom teaching. This drawback may be triggered

because of the four-year syllabus structure which is not up to the requirements of the standards as most of the pedagogical content knowledge courses are taught in their first language (Al-Jaro, Asmawi, & Hasim, 2017). On top of that, there is a need for rethinking and paying much attention to the ETEP with respect to course structure, supervision and duration. This will help administrators to reconstruct the university courses and enhance student teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills that are necessary for their teaching context. Besides, it could activate the role of supervision by assigning expert supervisors who have been trained in mentoring skills to supervise and observe the student teachers and provide them with the necessary support and feedback. On a pedagogical level, the present paper supports the notion that studying the student/prospective teachers' live experiences may pinpoint their problems and challenges encountered during practice and provide TEPs with insights to promote the desired outcomes.

In conclusion, it should be noted here that this study has some limitations. Thus, it is acknowledged that the study findings are limited to the study context and cannot be generalized to other settings. One limitation is the study context which is ETEP at the Faculty of Education, at a public university in Yemen. Hence, similar studies are recommended to be carried out on other ETEPs in similar contexts. Another limitation is the focus of this study and the adoption of the survey method to collect data. While this does not lessen the worth of the study, it would be suggested if a further study deeply investigates the classroom implementation and the supervisory support by observing the student teachers' teaching practice and interviewing their supervisors. This would provide some different findings and realities that could describe ETEP for professional teaching practice. Despite these limitations, this study might provide some insights for similar educational contexts, useful suggestions and valuable information for teacher educators, programme directors and decision makers.

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