

## *Original Paper*

# What EFL Student-Teachers Think about their Preparation Program: An Evaluation of Kuwait's English Practicum Program

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### ***Abstract***

*The present study evaluates the English language practicum program at the College of Basic Education in the State of Kuwait from the viewpoints of female student teachers. The study attempts to identify such strengths and weaknesses of the practicum experience in pre-service teachers' motivation to continue their future in the teaching profession. Quantitative research methodologies were used by adopting Peacock's (2009) model for practicum program evaluation. The current TEFL practicum program results have confirmed many strengths but also highlighted certain significant shortcomings from the student-teachers' perspective due to the gap between the theoretical and practical aspects, as well as the absence of adequate supervision, which affected the trainees' need for pedagogical competence in term of class and time management skills. The study proposes many recommendations and suggestions that the practicum program should be structured to improve the student teachers' needs and the educational context and fulfil the practical, beneficial content for the individuals.*

### ***Keywords***

*EFL program evaluation, language education programs, Higher Education, teachers' motivation, Kuwait*

## **1. Introduction**

No one can deny the English language's global influence (Agudo, 2017). Therefore, much emphasis has been placed on training highly qualified language teachers. Practicum course is generally accepted as a core element in teacher preparation programs. However, the assessments of student teachers'

competence during practicums appear to be specifically problematic as making judgments about complex performances such as teaching is a sophisticated process. As with any assessment, judgments are made against some criterion or normative standard, and these judgments must include some implicit or explicit understanding of what constitutes good teaching (Haig, Aitken, Ala'alatoa, Chandler, & Villers, 2013).

Many studies were conducted on personality traits of good teachers, teacher education, attitude toward education, problems and difficulties of teaching, workload, and institutional facilities. However, few studies have tried to develop the profile of pre-service teachers' needs and their reflections after the practicum and their future careers. A literature review revealed extensive repetition work with various variations worldwide. Whereas practicing teaching provides a context for analyzing instruction, learning, school culture, diversity, or any other issue related to schooling, researching these issues allows teachers to view schooling as complex and problematic (Maaranen & Korkfors, 2008). Locally in Kuwait, various researchers (e.g., Aladrweesh, 2016; Al-nwaiem, 2012) highlighted the importance of continuity in evaluating the English training program in addition to the recent calls for educational reforms in Kuwait (Ismail, 2021; Alajmi, 2021; Sadeq, Akbar, & Al Wazzan, 2021).

Other Kuwaiti researchers have indicated that Kuwait's education system does not provide adequate programs for its teachers, especially during the reform period. Teachers view professional development as extra information that is not applicable in the classroom context. There is a mismatch between the programs and teachers' demands, as they do not certify them since most professional development programs are informal (Alqahtani, 2018; cited in Alhashim, 2021).

Recent research indicated that teachers' quality and teaching are the most critical factors for student outcomes. Many educational reports emphasize that the main driver of variation in students learning in schools is the teachers (Malm, 2009; White, 2009; OCED, 2005). Several reports emphasized the importance of the practicum, which can be summarized as follow (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p. 43): 1) The quality of any educational system cannot exceed the quality of preparing its teachers, 2). The only way to improve the outcomes of any program is to improve the quality of the instructions, and 3). All successful systems had integrated practicum into their teacher training program. As a result, in Kuwait, at the national level, an analysis of data from the Ministry of Education MoE drew attention to the importance of teacher teaching outcomes (MoE, 2007).

In Kuwait, like many other countries, teachers perceive the teaching profession as exhausting, highly demanding, and overloaded with endless responsibilities. Due to the professional demands, many new teachers decided to retreat and drop out of this profession before starting, as mentioned in a few studies (Aladwani, 2021; Alhashim, 2021; Alamoudi, 2021).

Studies have indicated that student achievement is linked to teacher effectiveness. Instead of blaming teachers for low test scores, we can evaluate and support teacher effectiveness on a balanced set of all factors that research shows to improve student learning. This approach has been implemented in many American states, such as Arkansas, Idaho, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. These states used the

Framework for Teaching proposed by Charlotte Danielson, focusing on cultivating teacher qualities that are most apt to raise student achievement. These teacher qualities are needed for thousands of educators worldwide in many educational institutes involved with teacher professional development - from training to hiring, mentoring to supervising- should they rely on such a teacher framework (ASDS newsletter, summer 2010).

Despite the efforts made to encourage Kuwaiti students to specialize in teaching English, these efforts fade away, whether before or after students enter field practicum (Aladwani, 2021). For this reason, this research came to shed light on the student's experience during the field practicum course. This study was based on two premises. First, every profession needs to follow up and stand on the system for a while and review the program's outcome to evaluate it, stand on the weakness, and support the strengthening points (see Richards, 2008; Wallace, 1991; and Reid, 1996).

Second, standing on the student's point of view and considering their feedback provide necessary improvement and build evaluation plans into future teaching programs. Several authors noted the importance of students' reflection in different situations of their learning process (Crandall, 1993). Crandall (1993) indicates that the program should promote trainee flexibility in using teaching approaches for different situations and stress the ability to use and adapt the trainee reflection on the experience and values when they enter the program as they develop the "apprenticeship of observation". He added that this kind of evaluation increases teacher ownership if the teachers share the information gathered.

This paper investigates the EFL teaching practicum program from the perspective of future pre-service teachers in the College of Basic Education (CBE) at the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET) in Kuwait. It hopes to stand on the strengths, weaknesses, and obstacles students face during and post their practicum from their point of view and share a better understanding of effective pedagogical practice in various teacher education programs. Moreover, the present study explores the commitment level to continue their professional field after graduation.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

In Kuwait educational context, field teaching practice should be taken at the final year for all EFL students at the College of Basic Education (CBE). In their final term, it is essential to earn their Bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in public or private schools. Most of the supervisor staff working in the practicum used to work in public schools with adequate tenure experience in teaching English in the Ministry of Education. They are required to make frequent visits (three times a week) to observe and guide the student-teachers in their new experience as teachers, looking over their documentation and giving them feedback on what they have observed (Dashti & Salamh, 2013).

In general, the focus of this study was to stand on the student's needs after completing their practicum course in one of Kuwaiti primary schools. The College of Basic Education (CBE) has a particular

office responsible for college students' practical observation and training in all study majors (Al Tarkait, 1994). The College of Basic Education (CBE) offers the pre-service teaching practicum equal to ten credit hours in the students' central sheet. The norm is that student-teachers can take this practicum in the final year of their course study.

The program has its annual procedure for all students. The student-teachers spend four months in one primary public school in Kuwait allocated by the Practicum office in the CBE. Before starting their practicum, the office conducts an orientation meeting for all the students about the procedure and their qualifications to be qualified teachers and graduate from this intensive course. The first two weeks of the practicum let the student-teacher trainees observe different teaching models by an official teacher at school at a different class level in one of the primary government schools. The program has its evaluation procedures: an *Internal* observer, a senior teacher in the same school English department, and an *External* supervisor, from the practicum office in the College of Basic Education. At the end of the student teachers' 4 month-practicum, their total 100 points graded system will be allocated to the Senior school teacher 40%, The College Supervisor 40%, and school principal 10% evaluation. Most of the written recommendations reported by these supervisors were to improve and integrate abstract theoretical knowledge into the teaching profession and to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

### 3. Literature Review

Social judgment theory (Hammond, Rohrbaugh, Mumpower, & Adelman, 1977) has been used to better judge student teachers' willingness to teach. This theory indicates that some of the variations in people's judgments come from the context of judgments, and some come from judges' factors. This is important in contexts such as the internship, where context plays a crucial role. Social judgment theory is concerned with the cues and policies of judges. In the context of the practicum, cues are the aspects of a student teacher's practice to which evaluators pay attention. Policies are the evaluator's beliefs, value systems, and expectations that direct their attention to specific cues. This theory uses a lens model to frame its research (see Figure 1).

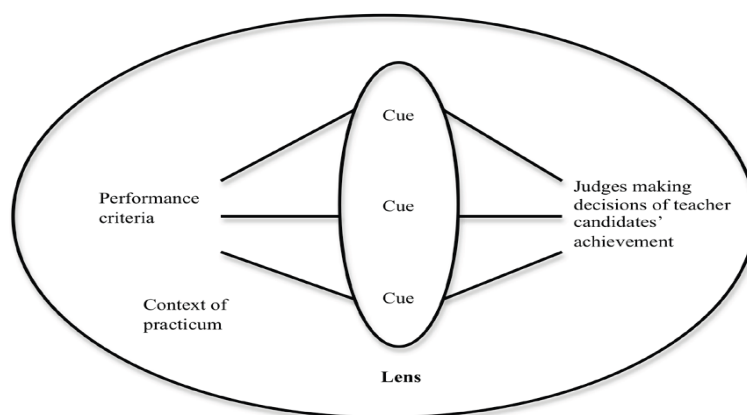


Figure 1. The Lens Model in Social Judgment Theory (Haig et al., 2013)

Teaching practicum is considered an essential component of teacher education to prepare novice teachers for real teaching (McIntyre, Byrd, & Fox, 1996). It influences teachers' teaching philosophy and perceptions regarding an effective teacher education program. Therefore, practice teaching has been a core course in English language teacher education (ELTE) programs. However, for English language trainee teachers who are placed at schools for their teaching practicum, this can be a painful experience. They might face challenges to the new environment, school organization, curriculum and methodology, teaching techniques, materials, and student population.

Lazaraton and Ishihara (2005) mentioned that pre-service teachers of English might have concerns regarding their English proficiency, self-esteem, cultural knowledge, and contextual knowledge. Meanwhile, current language teacher education programs need to consider teachers' extended roles and responsibilities because, as Garrido and Álvarez (2006) indicates, "how language teachers are to fulfil all these new roles and to carry out the corresponding responsibilities as teachers and learners depend significantly on their training and professional development." (p. 170).

As the changing reality brings new challenges, the literature suggests that language teachers must adapt their roles and responsibilities to the new demands and conditions to perform their jobs competently. Most student teachers begin their teacher training with different motivations to become teachers. Nevertheless, a minority of students consider that teacher training is, above all, intended to obtain a diploma that offers a wide variety of job opportunities, including outside teaching (Rots et al., 2006). For example, in Turkey, becoming an English teacher requires theoretical and practical knowledge. Teacher candidates from faculties of education in bachelor's degree programs in Turkey practice teaching by observing real classrooms and doing micro-teaching in real schools during their four-year teacher training (Selçuk, 2019).

In fact, seven factors influence students to pursue their careers as teachers, grouped as external and internal factors. External factors for becoming a teacher appearing via content analysis can be seen as reasonable and flexible working hours, family impact, and extended vacations. When participants were asked why they decided to pursue teaching as a career, all teacher candidates shared that teachers have fixed and flexible working hours.

Indeed, before entering the teaching profession and becoming novice teachers, teachers experience teaching to satisfy the practicum requirements (i.e., the school experience course) during their last semester. This internship course requires them to observe three different grade levels in real schools, write reflective papers, prepare lesson plans, and practice teaching. Then they are assessed and graded by their cooperative supervisors and teachers based on their performance. Further, Roberts (1998) noted the "triadic" relationship between student-teacher, cooperating teacher, and supervisor. Communication between the university and the partner school is essential for the development of the student-teacher. There may be such cases in which this relationship can be ruined if the program is fractured (Turney, 2013). Therefore, if supervisors and trainee teachers have common ideas about teaching and learning, the traineeship process can be better.

Research reports that the internship had a positive impact on students' attitudes towards teaching (Hodge et al., 2002), increased their level of job satisfaction (Reynolds et al., 2002) and decreased their stress significantly (Meirink et al., 2009). Other research has underscored the importance of the practicum by indicating that teacher turnover and retention factors are related to initial engagement in teaching and the quality of early teaching experiences (Ruhland, 2001). Students may begin teacher education with a more or less explicit motivation to become teachers. The work placement may affect student-teacher decisions about entering the profession; they can choose to become a teacher, stay in teaching, or leave it for another career when teaching practice ends.

At the Basic Education College in Kuwait, participating student teachers, in their final year of teacher training, are required to make systematic observations at three different levels of classes during the first term. They also have to complete 6 hours of teaching (three official hours and three non-official teaching presentations) combined with observation tasks in the second quadrimester. These pedagogical presentations are controlled by associate teachers (school mentors) and college supervisors (instructors from the CBE internship office). They also write reflective papers and prepare lesson plans, which their supervisors and associate teachers evaluate. Along with the internship, there is a compulsory evening class called "Research Group" to discuss their problems and obstacles during the internship led by university instructors specializing in the curriculum and English instructions of the College of Basic Education (CBE).

### *3.1 Research Questions*

Based on the previous review of the literature, this study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the current TEFL practicum program?
2. To what extent does practicum impact EFL teacher candidates' decisions about entry into the teaching profession?
3. Are there any significant differences in the outcome of the practicum based upon the student's potential job and their College GPA?

### *3.2 Research Limitations*

The present research is guided by the following limitations. The study participants, due to Kuwait Ministry of Education feminization policy to primary school teachers in Kuwait primary schools, the study sample is limited to female student-teachers at the College of Basic Education English major. As for the time, it is limited to the fall semesters of the academic years 2019/2021.

## **4. Methods**

### *4.1 Participants*

The study participants were all pre-service teachers pursuing their final year practicum in Kuwait's English department at the College of Basic Education. They are under the supervision of the Practicum Department at the Basic College of Education and from the Ministry of Education in the State of Kuwait by an English senior teacher school supervisor. The data collection questionnaires were

administered to 108 students who were all enrolled in the last term of the field practicum course at several public schools under the supervision of the Practicum Department at the College of Basic Education, PAAET, via Forum Microsoft app. Due to the Ministry of Education policy of feminizing primary schools in Kuwait government schools, the English department graduate English teachers for primary schools level only.

#### *4.2 Measures*

Peacock's model was used in this study questionnaire (Peacock, 2009). This evaluation model designed to evaluate an English teacher education program in Hong Kong seems to be a practical way of program evaluation in the context of Kuwait. The model is based on a comprehensive list of 15 questions that arose from relevant literature, and it encourages the researcher to collect valuable information from various program stakeholders. Also, the data-collection instruments in his model worked very well in his context. He claimed that his model would facilitate and encourage the evaluation of closed-ended items referring to elements of adequate training in other contexts of the TEFL student teachers programme.

#### *4.3 Survey Development*

Respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement with the statements on a Likert scale of strongly agree to disagree strongly. According to Coskun and Daloglu (2010), the Peacock model seems to be effective in collecting multidimensional feedback from the student teachers about the program's effectiveness.

Several modifications were done to reach the final version, consisting of 19 items besides two additional questions about the students' potential career and college grade-point average (GPA). The final edited questionnaire consisted of 3 sub-dimensions: planning and implementing instruction, professionalism, leadership, and assessment and evaluation. The responses are measured on a 5-point Likert Scale. The answers vary from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire consisted of 19 items, and its inter-item reliability was measured by Alpha Cronbach at ( $\alpha = .89$ ), which made this scale trustworthy and its results generalizable.

The questionnaire was used as one of the data collection instruments. It consists of a 19-item questionnaire and two questions about the future potential job and their college GPA. The questionnaire was given to 108 student teachers for two years, 2019-2021. The questionnaire adopted Peacock's (2009) model, covering diverse areas and consisting of 19 closed-ended items referring to elements of adequate training of EFL teachers.

The developed questionnaire was divided into three sections: (psychological preparation before entering the training field, personal enhancements and building confidence in dealing with students, and relationship management with colleagues and superiors at work. Three experts from the field of curriculum and instruction checked the perception opinionnaire as a research instrument, and subsequently, it was adjusted according to their suggestions.

Table 1 shows the high reliability of the dimensions of the questionnaire as the reliability correlations ranged between (0.870- 0.885) and the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire as a whole reached (.895). This indicates a high reliability of the questionnaire on a Kuwaiti sample, so it can be generalized to the primary sample of the study, and the results obtained can be reliable.

**Table 1. Reliability Correlations of Questionnaire's Dimensions**

| dimension                 | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| psychological preparation | 0.88             |
| personal enhancements     | 0.90             |
| relationship management   | 0.87             |

*Cronbach's Alpha level*

## 5. Data Analysis

A coding system was designed based on the questionnaire items and response categories to create a data file for analysis. Responses were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0. Descriptive statistics are used, including frequencies, percentages, means. This data was used to describe the primary responses to the questionnaire. ANOVA Analysis (one-way ANOVA) was utilized to compare the study variables' means and the significant levels.

### 5.1 Research question (1)

*What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the Practicum students' TEFL program at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait?*

The researcher reported the mean and frequency of the responses to answer the first question, as shown in the following table. The study shows that students most benefited outcomes from the field training were at the level of building self-confidence, acquiring teaching skills and identifying their weaknesses, and building self-confidence (see item 5,6,12).

It was clear by looking at the distribution of the frequencies in Table 1. It is almost acceptable to say that the pre-practicum course enhanced the student confidence to enter the teaching field. Results show that (75%) of students indicated that practicum prepared them for teaching, provided them with teaching skills, and empowered their weaknesses (see Table 1 item "4, 5, 6". For example, more than (53.6%) of the students reported that orientation was helpful for them, while 30.6% of the students indicated their natural opinion. Still, students who were training in the practicum course reported no link between theory and practice in the field. More than (74%) of the sample indicated that they did not experience such a link. For example, Table 1 shows that only (26.8%) of the participants reported that one out of four students indicated that they agree and strongly agree to find a link between theory and practicum during their practicum. In comparison, only (3.6%) of the students strongly agree to find a link between theory and practice.



Meanwhile, Table 2 indicated that one out of four students confirmed that they did not benefit from the practicum empowering their knowledge of understanding the needs of the students. In contrast, 30% of the students complained about the lack of appropriate educational tools to help them in teaching. In addition, the results shed light on the shortage of guidance in helping them in classroom management. Almost 4 out of 5 students (80.3%) indicated that they were not prepared and helped during the practicum in class regarding personal supervision or managing their teaching time.

**Table 2. Percentages, Means, and Std. Deviations for Items of Student's Experience during Their Practicum Course**

| No. | Items  | Strongly disagree | Disagree % | Neutral % | Agree % | Strongly Agree % | Mean % | Std. Deviation % |
|-----|--|-------------------|------------|-----------|---------|------------------|--------|------------------|
| 1   | Dose Orientation Helped                      | 5.4               | 10.7       | 30.4      | 30.4    | 23.2             | 3.55   | 1.12             |
| 2   | Choosing School                              | 14.3              | 23.2       | 28.6      | 25.0    | 8.9              | 2.91   | 1.18             |
| 3   | Link Theory with Practicum                   | 8.9               | 30.4       | 33.9      | 23.2    | 3.6              | 2.81   | 1.00             |
| 4   | PRACTICUM PREPARE US AS TEACHERS             | 8.9               | 8.9        | 10.7      | 46.4    | 25.0             | 3.69   | 1.19             |
| 5   | PRACTICUM PROVIDE US WITH TEACHING SKILLS    | 7.1               | 8.9        | 8.9       | 50.0    | 25.0             | 3.76   | 1.13             |
| 6   | PRACTICUM EMPOWER MY WEAKNESS                | 5.4               | 12.5       | 8.9       | 50.0    | 23.2             | 3.73   | 1.11             |
| 7   | HELPED TO USE VARITY OF TEACHING TOOLS       | 10.7              | 19.6       | 14.3      | 32.1    | 23.2             | 3.37   | 1.32             |
| 8   | HELPED TO IMPLEMENT STUDENT CENTRAL STRATEGY | 3.6               | 14.3       | 16.1      | 50.0    | 16.1             | 3.60   | 1.03             |
| 9   | HELPED UNDERSTAND STUDENTS NEEDS             | 14.3              | 10.7       | 17.9      | 32.1    | 25.0             | 3.43   | 1.35             |
| 10  | HELPEMEND IN CLASS MANAGMENTS                | 12.5              | 17.9       | 8.9       | 39.3    | 21.4             | 3.39   | 1.33             |
| 11  | HELPED USING DIFFERENT RESOURCES             | 5.4               | 25.0       | 3.6       | 44.6    | 21.4             | 3.51   | 1.23             |
| 12  | ENHANCED MY SELF CONFEDENCE                  | 3.6               | 17.9       | 7.1       | 44.6    | 26.8             | 3.73   | 1.14             |
| 13  | HELPED PRACTICE MY ENGLISH                   | 5.4               | 23.2       | 7.1       | 42.9    | 21.4             | 3.51   | 1.21             |
| 14  | HELPED IN CLASS &TIME MANAGMENT              | 8.9               | 17.9       | 8.9       | 44.6    | 19.6             | 3.48   | 1.24             |

|    |   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|----|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 15 | HELPED IN FULFILING MY TEACHING NEEDS & AMPTION | 8.9  | 16.1 | 19.6 | 35.7 | 19.6 | 3.41 | 1.22 |
| 16 | BY THE END IM READY TO TEACH                    | 5.4  | 14.3 | 16.1 | 33.9 | 30.4 | 3.69 | 1.19 |
| 17 | HELPED IN CONTINUING MY TEACHING CAREER         | 7.1  | 17.9 | 32.1 | 25.0 | 17.9 | 3.28 | 1.16 |
| 18 | HELPED IN FACING CHALLENGES & OPSTICALS         | 14.3 | 25.0 | 17.9 | 30.4 | 12.5 | 3.01 | 1.28 |
| 19 | HEAD DEPT WAS HELPFULL                          | 3.6  | 17.9 | 25.0 | 30.4 | 23.2 | 3.51 | 1.13 |

### 5.2 Research Question (2)

*To what extent does the College of Basic Education Practicum impact the EFL student teacher candidates' decisions about entry into the teaching profession?*

**Table 3. One-way ANOVA of Mean Differences of Practicum Experience and Future Career Potential & Total GPA**

| Variable         | Category                    | Mean  | SD.   | f     | SIG    |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Potential Career | Continuing Graduate studies | 62.72 | 17.75 | 1.426 | .001** |
|                  | Governmental school         | 69.61 | 16.36 |       |        |
|                  | Private schools             | 66.50 | 14.93 |       |        |
|                  | Other Job not Teaching      | 63.42 | 15.44 |       |        |
|                  | Private sector Banks        |       |       |       |        |
| GPA              | Weak                        | 61.8  | .100  | 1.85  | .012   |
|                  | average                     | 63.8  | 20.3  |       |        |
|                  | Good                        | 66.7  | 14.4  |       |        |
|                  | Very Good                   | 68.0  | 15.8  |       |        |
|                  | Excellent                   | 67.5  | 22.9  |       |        |

Table 3 shows that almost half of the participants (48.2%) indicated that they plan to pursue their graduate studies rather than join the teaching field. At the same time, only one out of 3 participants (35.7%) indicated their readiness to enter the teaching field. The remaining (16%) reported working either in public or private sector out of the teaching field. The findings show that the practicum experience has not motivated the students to move into the teaching field.

### 5.3 Research Question (3)

Are there any significant differences in the outcome of the practicum based upon the student's potential job and their college GPA?

Findings in Table 3 revealed that although the average means for all students were moderate at the statistical significance level in terms of their potential careers. Students who indicated that their potential career to work in governmental school have a higher mean compared with other potential careers ( $M= 69.61$ ) with a significant level of ( $F=1.42, P>.001$ ). On the other hand, students who plan to work at private schools reported having the second higher mean than the other categories. Furthermore, students who intend to complete their post-graduate studies reported the least beneficiaries of the field practicum ( $M=62.72$ ).

Moreover, Table 3 showed a significant difference in students' future careers based upon their GPA level. Students with an average grade of "Very Good" have a higher mean compared with other average grades groups ( $M= 68.0$ ) with a significant level of ( $F=1.85, P>.012$ ). It was revealed that students reported having the second higher means than the other average great groups ( $M= 67.5$ ). In contrast, students whose GPA level was Weak reported being the least beneficiaries of the field practicum ( $M=61.8$ ).

It is clear from the results that the students with higher total GPA grade-level play a vital role in the results and outcomes that the student achieves from the practicum training, as indicated by the results in this study. It can be attributed that the Kuwait government school curriculum emphasizes teaching languages rely primarily on the student-teachers' level of English proficiency and the teachers' fluency in teaching language skills (Sadeq et al., 2021). It is worth mentioning that the results obtained in this research paper are opposed to the findings of Peacock (2009) in the sense that teaching skills -pedagogic competence- are emphasized over English proficiency and management skills.

## 6. Discussion

This study shed light on the quality of the practicum preparation program of future English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Kuwait. The practicum term is considered an essential component of teacher education for student-teachers preparation programs to actual teaching (McIntyre, Byrd, & Fox, 1996). It influences both their teaching philosophy and perceptions regarding an effective teacher education program and the Social Judgment Theory. In Kuwait EFL student teaching practicum, the assessors pay attention to the student teacher's practice cues. The policies' individual practices are the assessor's beliefs that affect the student teachers' decisions in their future profession. This theory was very relevant in this study. The findings raised the concern for the quality of providing students with sufficient language proficiency development and methodology skills needed to consider their future teaching profession.

Indeed, the practicum course should promote the development of pedagogical knowledge and teaching competence. Our findings were reported in a previous study by Peacock (2009), who reported that

practicum helped students become familiar with different methods and approaches to EFL teaching. The most critical finding of the current study revealed the lack of the English program theoretical knowledge and teaching practical pedagogical skills.

The study's result consisted of another study done by Nguyen (2017), who raised the same concerns about the lack of support from mentors in the practicum program. Such findings also consisted of other studies that found a lack of connection between theory and practice. For example, Johnson (1996), Lampert (2010), and Akcan (2016) report candidate teachers complain that professional preparation courses deliver too much theory and too little practice. Others reported that it is common in many Asian countries where teaching practicum of English teacher education programs to be found not very effective (Nguyen & Baldauf, 2010; Hu, 2005).

Overall, the findings reported that 4 out of 5 students (80.3%) indicated that the practicum did not prepare and help in class management due to the weak supervision either in school or from the college Practicum department, which affected their self-confidence in time and classroom management techniques. In this respect, some student teachers had comments in the College Seminar such as:

*We were not trained to face the unexpected situations that may happen in classes” and “We did not learn how to manage a class with children with special educational needs”. Concerning this question, other suggestions, made by some candidate teachers, were as follows: “we need more courses on L2 learning psychology, particularly when teaching primary learners with language difficulties cases and how to handle bullying and conflictive classroom situations.*

These findings are consistent with another study done in Algeria by Youcef and Taoufik (2015), which aimed to examine the adequacy of the pre-service training program at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria. Their findings showed that lack of teaching practice is among the significant problems that should be addressed to render the current pre-service teacher training program to prepare professionally qualified EFL teachers.

Meanwhile, this study revealed surprisingly that Kuwait EFL practicum experience did not motivate the student-teachers to continue seeking a career in government or private schools. Almost 48.2% of the participants in this study indicated that they would like to continue their post-graduate studies rather than join the teaching field. Several factors can contribute to the shift in their potential plan, and the first one is external obstacles. Teaching is a highly demanding and stressful profession with many challenges and requirements beyond working hours. Teachers come early and leave late and carry their work grading and recording papers at home. Also, new teachers usually lack the balance between their new teaching profession and their social life. There are other internal pedagogical factors: such as class management skills, students' discipline problems, students' parents' interventions, and meeting the school administration commitments in school routines. In addition, practicum students carry a financial burden when they spend lots of money to purchase school supplies and materials for their lessons while they are student-teachers (Chmarkh, 2021; Aladwani, 2021).

Like many non-native English-speaking countries, Kuwait considers English language graduates valuable candidates in many job sectors; banking, social media, local business stores, and airline companies due to the high demands of fluent English language speakers in commercial and private sectors. The Kuwait government rarely allows non-Kuwaitis to teach in government schools except for high GPA graduates in higher education colleges. Sadly, many non-Kuwaitis or stateless - those born in Kuwait with no citizenship- are hired in private schools and private sectors only.

These findings are inconsistent with other studies that reported that practicum had a positive impact on the students' attitudes towards teaching (Peacock, 2009, Hodge et al., 2002), the level of their job satisfaction (Reynolds et al., 2002), managing their stress level significantly (Meirink et al., 2009), and their initial teaching commitment (Ruhland, 2001). For example, in Turkey, Çimen and Daloğlu (2019) concluded that their experiences shaped their six pre-service EFL teacher participants' pre-practicum cognitions as learners and teacher education coursework. After practicum, the EFL pre-service teachers improved their classroom management strategies, but there was a slight improvement in overcoming educational policy-related challenges.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Teachers are probably the single most predictors of students' future academic success. Thus student-teacher relationships are the core of any quality learning experience (Farrell, 2015; 2001). Given the importance of systematic evaluation of teacher education programs to enhance the quality of Education. This research study sheds light on Kuwait's EFL teacher practicum program that needs improvement and links the research findings to other teacher education programs. The study revealed the strengths and weaknesses of EFL teacher education from the student teachers' perspectives. In general, the TEFL practicum program was evaluated negatively in terms of pedagogical competence, and the program supervisors did not adequately cover managerial school skills.

Another weakness that the English department lacks is the practical part, and the gap should be bridged between theory and practice. Since the evaluations are an issue under the influence of sociocultural context, caution should be exercised in interpreting and generalizing the present study's findings given the study's limitations on one gender female sample. Perhaps future studies should include males and females in a follow-up study. In addition, expand it with supervisors' views and the English Department instructors and the Ministry supervisors and include in-depth interviews of a larger sample of students and instructors from the ministry and the Colleges Practicum Department.

The Ministry of Education should hire new teachers from all nationalities, especially those who graduate from the College of Basic Education, to work in Kuwait government schools to raise the students' motivation. It is suggested to open an avenue with the English department specialized academics to overcome the weakness of the practicum program. Furthermore, meetings, workshops, and small discussion sessions must be conducted between school personnel, supervisors, college academics and practicum supervisors instructors, and pre-service teachers to explore critical issues and

anticipate possible solutions to stop the student teachers from leaking out of the profession before they have started. In sum, this pre-service EFL practicum research in Kuwait has shown that having a positive teacher education experience is a stepping-stone toward a successful teaching career.

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