Original Research

# Practicum Program Implementation and Its Contribution to Pedagogical Knowledge of Primary School Teachers: The case of Western Oromia teachers Training College

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| Abstract | Article Information |
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| *The Western Oromia College of Teachers Education conducted a study on the success and failures of a practicum implementation program for student teachers, using the QUAN-QUAL model and involving Dembidolo, Nekemte, and Shambu participants through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The study aimed to understand the program's impact on student teachers' pedagogical understanding. The data shows a positive view of practicum programs in developing student-teacher pedagogical skills among tutors, mentors, and student-teachers. However, student instructors struggle with lesson plans, SMART goals, and assessment tools. They also struggle with effective instruction methods. The program's connection between teacher preparation institutions and placement schools is inadequate. Most student instructors disagree that their mentors and tutors have high expectations but fail to meet them. The study found that the implementation of practicum in the study location faced challenges due to lack of collaboration among stakeholders, insufficient monitoring, and a large number of student teachers being partnered with a single tutor or mentor. The primary challenges included assigning practicum portfolios without prior criteria and connecting them with tutors and mentors. Recommendations include providing adequate feedback and support, encouraging collaboration between tutors and mentors, and strengthening college relationships with placement schools.* | <br><br>*Corresponding Author:<br>Kebede Nemomsa<br><br>E-mail:<br>kebedensaqeta@gmail.com |

## INTRODUCTION

With the development of mass education systems in Western Europe during the 1800s, teachers' preparation became more organized. In general, a Western model of teacher preparation expanded to the periphery; in Canada, Australia, and Singapore—all former British Empire colonies—the undergraduate and graduate teacher education model of the United Kingdom is the predominant model. Conversely, Confucius is extremely influential in Chinese educational and intellectual traditions. But in the contemporary era,

Nanyang Gongxue (Higher Public School), founded in 1879, became China's first official teacher training institution. This was modeled after Japanese educational modernization, which, in turn, was based in part on the French model. Gopinathan (2008) Transforming Teacher Education: Redefining Professionals for 21st Century Schools. Modern education in Ethiopia was introduced in 2008. Following the establishment of Menelik II School, the first standardized training institution called Teacher Training College (TTC) opened in 1944/45 at the premises of Menelik II School, focusing on language, psychology, and history of education, morals and ethics in teaching, learning, and teaching methods. In 1949, TTC changed to teacher training school (TTS), and students were admitted from grade eight for further four-year education (G8+4) or from grade nine for a further three-year program (G9+3) to be teachers. In 1964, TTS changed to the Teacher Training Institute (TTI), admitting students from G10 for further two-year training (10+2); in 1979, TTI admitted students from G12 for further half-year training; and in 1980, it modified to 12+1/12+2 years of teacher training. In 2003, TESO launched TTC/CTE as a 10+3 program plus a clustering approach, linear and clustering mix, and since 2012, linear, specialist, and generalist mix have been in place, but for the same duration as being a primary school teacher (grades 1–8). Later on, Kotebe Arts and Mechanical College started to train teachers for upper primary and then secondary schools. After these developments, Haramaya University, Dilla College of Teacher Education and Health Sciences, and Bahir Dar Teachers' College

embarked on teacher training schemes (MOE, 2003).

Since the introduction of modern education to Ethiopia in 1908, the country's educational system has faced significant challenges related to quality education in general and teacher training and development programs in particular. The practicum, teaching techniques, and professional studies were given adequate time and priority as part of the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) that the Ministry of Education launched in an attempt to address the severe issues with the current educational system (MoE, 2003). The practicum is one of these elements and the center of the teacher preparation curriculum (Kennedy, 1993; MoE, 2003; Zeichner, 1996). In addition to strengthening the connections between theory and practice and placing a greater emphasis on experiences in both community and school settings, it was created to guarantee that student teachers have as much supported school experience as possible prior to entering the classroom as qualified teachers (MoE, 2003; Ben-Peretz, 2000). Placing trainees in classrooms to help them grasp the reality of teaching is one facet of such instruction. Practicums are the usual term for these placements. Practicums are meant to assist student instructors in starting to comprehend the confusing experiences of teaching practice and in gaining the sophisticated professional knowledge necessary to succeed as educators (Glazier, 2009). An encounter that calls for the application of theory or conceptual knowledge in the real world is called a practicum. Furthermore, practicum has been regarded as a location where student teachers hone their teaching skills in an authentic classroom

setting. During a designated block of time, student teachers are paired with a single teacher and class (Zeichner, 1996, quoted in Fekede Tuli & Gemechis File, 2009).

**Statement of the Problem**

To equip pre-service and in-service teachers with the information, abilities, and qualities needed to teach successfully in classrooms of the twenty-first century, teacher education programs should work toward these goals. Less successful teachers lack the information and skill sets that good teachers possess. This kind of knowledge and ability isn't just acquired by reading books or studying instruction; it's also fostered by excellent practice chances that come with encouragement and criticism (Phelps, 2009; Ball & Forzani, 2009). Giving instructors practical contact with students and schools early in their courses is the greatest method to prepare them for their future roles as educators (MoE, 2003). This suggests that practicum is a crucial component in helping student teachers understand how to teach. Practice-based experiences give applicants the chance to put content pedagogy into practice, obtain practical experience, comprehend school dynamics, and—above all—work with students in a monitored setting. According to Fayhaa Al-Momani's (2016) study, there are a number of significant factors that contribute to practicum challenges from the perspectives of student teachers and supervisors at the College of Education, Najran University.

These factors include having a large number of students in each classroom, not having access to advanced educational technologies, having a large number of practicum students from the same major at the cooperating school, supervision, and administrative workload. Supervisors identify the following as practicum challenges: using outside information sources; using educational aid; mistreating the school administration; feeling alone; having a limited understanding of the subject matter; the curriculum's difficulty; the training period's sufficiency; minimal involvement in extracurricular activities; having a fear of teaching; communication skills; connecting theory and practice; and practical application in the laboratory. Fekede Tuli and Gemechis File's (2009) study on practicum experiences in teacher education demonstrates the significant influence practicum experiences have on pre-service teachers. This is because practicums are authentic, unlike the lab-like setting of postsecondary education courses. Mesfin Fantu's (2014) study on the practice and difficulties of practicum at Shambu College of Teacher Education also identifies significant practicum difficulties, such as the inability to develop reflective teaching abilities in student teachers, practicum assessment issues, insufficient supervision, and insufficient professional support from mentors and tutors. Only the main practicum issues are included in the aforementioned research. A practicum's purpose is to connect theory with practice in an actual educational environment. The difficulties of the practicum are the subject of many studies on the program; yet, there is a dearth of research on the practicum experience and the pedagogical expertise demanded of student-teachers. Because of this, the researchers at Western Oromia College of Teachers Education started evaluating the practicum's implementation and in addition to

pedagogical knowledge. In order to do this, the research aims to respond to the following queries:

1. To what extent do student-teachers get pedagogical skills from practicum experiences?
2. To what extent do teachers training colleges and primary schools work together in planning, managing, and implementing practicum?
3. Do mentors and tutors provide effective professional support for students and teachers during the practicum?
4. What are the major challenges encountered during the implementation of the practicum program at Western Oromia College of Teachers Education?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, a mixed approach was employed. The approach makes use of the pragmatic method and system of philosophy. Mixed-methods research, employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, has gained popularity because research methodology continues to evolve and develop, and a mixed method is another step forward, utilizing the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. As a methodology, mixed methods (MM) provide a means to facilitate and explain several complex phenomena across various disciplines, Creswell (2009). Since this study aimed to investigate a deeper understanding and a fuller description of practicum implementation and its contribution to the

pedagogical skills of primary school teachers at West Wollega Teacher Education College, the interpretive and positivist paradigm of research (mixed approach) was found to be the most appropriate. Data could be obtained through survey questionnaires (quantitative data), in-depth interviews, and document review discussions (qualitative data). Both qualitative and quantitative data was gathered in one phase and merged during data analysis. A total of 418 students, i.e., practicum coordinators 3, mentors 35, tutors 100, and 280 student-teachers, were involved in the study.

## Instruments of data collection

### Interview

An interview is a planned conversation where one person asks another for information. Interviews are useful for gaining understanding of topics that are difficult to observe directly, such as people's experiences, knowledge, attitudes, feelings, and perspectives; they can also shed light on past events and how individuals organize and define their lives and the world around them (Patton, 2002). Interviews with practicum coordinators from every college were done for this study in order to learn more about the procedures followed and the difficulties encountered when implementing practicums.

## Questionnaire

A written self-report survey was created and sent to a pre-selected set of research participants. A questionnaire is made up of several questions typed or printed in a specific order on a form or series of forms, which are

then mailed to respondents who are required to read, comprehend, and answer the questions in the designated space on the form (Kothari, 2004). With the use of questionnaires, the researcher can quickly and efficiently gather a lot of data. Questionnaires were created for this study and given to college tutors, school mentors, and student instructors. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were included in the questionnaires. The questionnaires distributed to students and teachers were produced in English and then translated into Afan Oromo to make it easy and clear for study participants to respond to the items. College tutors and school mentors completed the surveys in English. Before the questionnaires were distributed to study participants, a pilot test was conducted to make sure the generated items were valid and the wording made sense.

## Document Review

Documents refer to those sources of data that are not produced at the request of the researcher but are produced and are out there waiting to be assembled and analyzed. They include such forms as letters, diaries, photographs, newspapers, magazines, videos, audios, and autobiographies. Bryman, A. (2008). Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined a document as any written or recorded material not prepared for the purposes of the evaluation or at the request of the inquirer. The documents used in this study were a sample of weekly (daily) plans, annual plans, and a student-teacher practicum portfolio.

## Methods of Data Analysis

For the data that was gathered, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methodologies were applied. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequencies were used in a quantitative analysis of the data obtained from closed-ended questions. In addition, narrative descriptions derived from qualitative analysis of data collected via open-ended questions, interviews, and document reviews were cross-checked with quantitative data to corroborate the results. Ultimately, key conclusions and discoveries were reached based on the data gathered, and suggestions were sent forth.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This study looked into how the practicum implementation program at West Wollega Teacher Education College helped teachers and students develop their teaching skills. In all, 280 students, 100 mentors, 35 tutors, 3 practicum coordinators, and teachers from the three teacher preparation colleges participated in the study. Both quantitative (descriptive analysis) and qualitative (thematic data analysis) methods were used for this investigation. Thematic data analysis and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the information obtained from open-ended surveys, and thematic analysis was used to identify the themes that arose from in-depth interviews and document reviews. Below is a description of the study's findings.

**Table 1**

*Tutors' and mentors responses to the extent to which student-teachers get pedagogical skills from practicum experiences*

| N | Practicum program enabled student –teachers to : | | Rating Scale | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | SA | A | UN | DA | SDA | |
| 1 | Assist the classroom teacher in organizing and preparing a classroom. | F | 53 | 39 | 8 | - | - | 100 |
| | | % | 53 | 39 | 8 | | | 100 |
| 2 | Gradually take responsibility for teaching the subject areas. | F | 8 | 92 | - | - | - | 100 |
| | | % | 8 | 92 | - | | | 100 |
| 3 | Write objectives and daily lesson plans properly. | F | 4 | 42 | - | 50 | 4 | 100 |
| | | % | 4 | 42 | - | 52 | 4 | 100 |
| 4 | Make a Lesson coherent and well organized and pacing is appropriate. | F | 4 | 27 | - | 65 | 4 | 100 |
| | | % | 4 | 27 | - | 65 | 4 | 100 |
| 5 | assign and manage individual, pair, group and whole class work | F | 4 | 65 | 4 | 23 | 4 | 100 |
| | | % | 4 | 65 | 4 | 23 | 4 | 100 |
| 6 | Utilize teaching aids that is appropriate to enhance the conceptual understanding. | F | - | 12 | 4 | 80 | 4 | 100 |
| | | % | - | 12 | 4 | 80 | 4 | 100 |
| 7 | use strategies( teaching methods) that were appropriate for the content and support learning outcomes | F | - | 40 | - | 58 | 2 | 100 |
| | | % | - | 10 | - | 88 | 2 | 100 |
| 8 | Develop confidence in delivering the lesson in the classroom | F | - | 43 | - | 57 | - | 100 |
| | | % | - | 23 | - | 77 | - | 100 |
| 9 | understand individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning | F | - | 72 | 8 | 16 | 4 | 100 |
| | | % | - | 72 | 8 | 16 | 4 | 100 |
| 10 | Implement different assessment strategy appropriately | F | 12 | 70 | 18 | - | - | 100 |
| | | % | 12 | 70 | 18 | - | - | 100 |
| 11 | Knows how to respond to misbehaved students in the classroom | F | - | 78 | - | 22 | - | 100 |
| | | % | - | 78 | - | 22 | - | 100 |

N.B: *F = frequency, SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, UN = undecided, DA=disagree, SDA= strongly disagree*

As shown in Item 1 on Table 1 above, 53 (53%) of tutors strongly agree and 39 (39%) agree about the support delivered to student-teachers to enhance classroom teaching conducted by the actual teacher (mentor). Concerning item No. 2 of the table, 8 (8%)

tutors and mentors strongly agree, 92 (92%) agree, and then 100% of respondents reported that student-teachers gradually take responsibility for teaching the subject areas. Regarding item 3 of this table, 4% of tutors and mentors strongly agree, 42% agree, 50% disagree, and 4% strongly disagree. In this show, the majority of the respondents, 54 (54%), disagree that student-teachers write objectives in the daily lesson plan and are unable to prepare daily lesson plans properly, and only 46 (46%) of tutors and mentors agree that the student-teachers are able to prepare a proper lesson plan.

As indicated in item 4, 69 (69%) of respondents disagree that the lesson is coherent, well organized, and pacing is appropriate when student-teachers deliver the lesson, and only 31 (31%) agree that the lesson is coherent, well organized, and pacing is appropriate. Whereas, in item 5 of this table, 69 (69%) of respondents agree that student teacher assigning and managing individual, pair, and group work, while 27 (27%) of respondents disagree.

Concerning item 6 of the table, the majority of the respondents, 84 (84%), reported that student-teachers did not utilize teaching aids effectively. Concerning item 7 of the table, 60 (60%) of tutors and mentors reported that student-teachers did not use appropriate teaching methods that were appropriate for the content and support learning outcomes, and 40 (40%) of respondents agreed that teachers used appropriate teaching methods that were appropriate for the content and support learning outcomes. This implies that most student-teachers have problems in designing appropriate teaching methods that fit their

daily lessons. Regarding item 8 of the table, 57 (57%) of tutors replied that student-teachers were not confident in delivering the lesson, and 43 (43%) of tutors agreed that student-teachers were confident in delivering the lesson. Regarding item 9 of the table, 72 (72%) of respondents agree that student-teachers have an understanding of individual differences, and 20 (20%) of tutors disagree. In Item 10 of the table, 70% of respondents agree that during the practicum program, the student-teachers used appropriate assessment methods in assessing students' progress. Lastly, with regard to item 11 of this table, 78 (78%) of tutors agree that student-teachers know how to respond to misbehaving students in the classroom, while 22 (22%) disagree.

To support the quantitative data, the researcher conducted a document review of the annual, weekly, and daily lesson plans of 50 student-teachers and their portfolio reports. Accordingly, the researcher has observed the following gaps: Some student-teachers write objectives in the table next to content. Not stating all teachers' activities (introduction, presentation, summary, and evaluation) separately and clearly, Few student-teachers did not include time allocated for each teacher's activities. This problem varied from school to school and was mostly observed in Dembidolo teachers education, student-teachers Unable to write SMART objectives, student-teachers used words like know, understand (non-behavioral), etc. instead of using action verbs like tell, describe, state, identify, etc.

The data from student's portfolio indicates that student -teachers Write double objectives in a single statement; Writing only one objective for all contents (weekly lesson

plan)'. With regard to the annual lesson plan, some student-teachers did not include the number of working days or the number of periods per week in their annual plan. Portfolios of many students and teachers were not readable, and there were duplications of portfolios (coped from each other) rather than writing their own view point.

Overall, it is clear from the data above that student teachers acquire a variety of teaching competencies in the real classroom, and tutors have a favorable opinion of the practicum program's contribution to the development of student teachers' pedagogical abilities. Tutors and mentors did not strongly value the actual competency of student-teachers, despite the fact that some of these competencies improved and developed over time. Student-teachers' responses in Table 1 suggest that these competency areas of instruction require additional support in order to effectively communicate the expected contribution.

**Table 2**

*The extent Teacher Training Colleges and Primary schools work together in planning, managing and implementing the program (mentors and Tutors perception)*

| No. | Activities | Responses ( frequency and percentage ) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Dembidolo | | | | Nekemte | | | | Shambu | | | |
| | | Yes | % | No | % | Yes | % | No | % | yes | % | No | % |
| 1 | College and placement school plan the activities of practicum program jointly | 15 | 29 | 37 | 71 | 31 | 56 | 15 | 27 | 10 | 35 | 18 | 65 |
| 2 | College tutors and school mentors have collaboratively working during practicum | 18 | 35 | 34 | 65 | 29 | 53 | 25 | 45 | 11 | 39 | 17 | 61 |
| 3 | Training college conduct feedback meeting with practicum placement school | 10 | 19 | 33 | 81 | 21 | 38 | 34 | 62 | 5 | 18 | 23 | 82 |
| 4 | Training college facilitate workshops for placement schools | 33 | 63 | 19 | 37 | 37 | 67 | 18 | 33 | 17 | 60 | 11 | 40 |

To answer the second research question that aimed to determine the extent to which teachers training colleges and primary schools work together to improve trainee competence as perceived by college tutors and school mentors, means were extracted for all respondents from the teachers training colleges, as results are drawn from the table.

Table 2 reflects tutors and mentors views of the extent to which placement primary schools work with teachers training colleges to improve student-teacher teaching competence, 20% of respondents from Dembidolo, 56% from Nekemte, and 35 from Shambu (a total of 40%) agreed that placement schools and teacher training colleges work together in

planning the different activities of the practicum program. The majority of the tutors and mentors (71%, 27%, and 65 (total 54%) from Dembidolo, Nekemte, and Shambu, respectively, disagree that they were not working cooperatively on the practicum issue.

Regarding item 2, 35%, 53%, and 39% of Dembidolo, Nekemte, and Shambu, respectively, agreed that school mentors and teachers training college tutors work cooperatively during the practicum program. However, a significant number of respondents (65% from Dembidolo, 25% from Nekemte, and 61% from Shambu) agreed that they were not working together during the practicum

program. Item 3 of the table shows that 19%, 38%, and 18% reported that they facilitate feedback meetings with students and teachers, and the teachers, and the majority of them (81%, 62% , and 82%) agreed that they did not facilitate feedback meetings. College tutors and school mentors were reflected on whether teachers training colleges facilitate workshops on issues of practicum or not, as indicated on the table. 63% from Dembidolo, 67% from Nekemte, and 60% from Shambu reflected that teachers training colleges facilitate different trainings on practicum issues, and a total of 36% disagree.

**Table 3**

*Student- Teachers' Response towards support from their tutors and mentors*

| Types of Colleges | | regular discussion | encourage and listen students | observe and judge students' performance | Feedback | Role model |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DD | Mean | 1.68 | 1.5155 | 1.5464 | 1.5979 | 1.6907 |
| | Std. Deviation | .469 | .50236 | .50043 | .49286 | .46460 |
| | Variance | .220 | .252 | .250 | .243 | .216 |
| | % of Total Sum | 36.8% | 39.2% | 35.5% | 35.8% | 37.6% |
| NK | Mean | 1.64 | 1.2453 | 1.5755 | 1.6226 | 1.5660 |
| | Std. Deviation | .482 | .43230 | .49662 | .48703 | .49797 |
| | Variance | .232 | .187 | .247 | .237 | .248 |
| | % of Total Sum | 39.3% | 35.2% | 39.5% | 39.7% | 38.1% |
| SH | Mean | 1.72 | 1.5574 | 1.7213 | 1.7213 | 1.7213 |
| | Std. Deviation | .452 | .50082 | .45207 | .45207 | .45207 |
| | Variance | .204 | .251 | .204 | .204 | .204 |
| | % of Total Sum | 23.7% | 25.3% | 24.8% | 24.2% | 24.1% |
| Total | Mean | 1.67 | 1.4151 | 1.5962 | 1.6340 | 1.6453 |
| | Std. Deviation | .470 | .49367 | .49158 | .48263 | .47933 |
| | Variance | .221 | .244 | .242 | .233 | .230 |
| | % of Total Sum | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

*DD = Dembidolo, NK =Nekemte, SH = Shambu*

As it can be seen from Table 3, the responses of student-teachers to mentors and tutors support for student teachers were computed.

The mean scale scores are indicators of the average frequency of each support. On a scale of 1–5, the Likert scale shows that a response

of "1" strongly agrees and a response of "5" strongly disagrees.

Table 3 shows the five support areas of tutors and mentors: regular discussion with student-teachers (M = 1.67, SD =.47), encouraging and listening to student-teacher ideas (M = 1.4, SD =.49), observing and judging students' performance (M = 1.59, SD =.49), and providing timely feedback (M =1.6, SD =.48). This implies that the majority of the respondents agree that tutors and mentors provide support for students and teachers. The support area's overall mean score falls within the 'agree' range, ranging from 1.44 to 1.67. The three colleges' mean scores appear to be comparable. When it comes to helping students and teachers during the practicum program, there are no appreciable mean differences across teacher preparation institutions.

## The Major Challenges Encountered During the Implementation of the Practicum Program

This study's component evaluated the difficulties encountered in putting the practicum program into action. Thus, open-ended questions were given to student-teachers, practicum coordinators, college tutors, and school mentors. The responses were then qualitatively examined as follows: Most tutors list Lack of adequate time, number of student-teachers assigned for tutors, coping portfolios from each other, and some student-teachers were careless and not prepared well for classroom instruction. Some mentors took this as an opportunity to take rest rather than attending the day-to-day activities of student-teachers and finally gave

them a similar score. Mentors also mentioned the number of student-teachers assigned under their supervision; a few student-teachers were not ethical and ready to learn from their mentor; assigning student-teachers out of their area of study (subject area); most tutors did not contact mentors and discuss the student-teachers; weak follow-up of practicum coordinators; and collaboration between the teacher's college and placement schools. Student-teachers also list challenges like insufficient payment (50 birr/day), low commitment of tutors and mentors to help them, and low facilities in placement schools.

The practicum coordinators also explained that they did not take into account any criteria like educational qualification (academic rank, work experience, etc.) when they assigned tutors to student-teachers, and they argue that all academic stuff (instructors) have equal rights and share equal student-teachers assigned to them. The researcher considers this as one challenge of the practicum program because to provide better support and equip student-teachers with the right pedagogical knowledge, teachers with higher academic rank and better experience can contribute better and have to take on greater responsibility. This is in line with the idea expressed by Fekede Tuli and Gemechis File (2009): the teachers' education institution practicum staff are well-qualified and capable professionals who can work across both campus and school settings, earning and enjoying a high standing both with their academic colleagues and with their counterpart teacher colleagues in the schools. Due to this fact, few tutors and mentors did not have the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and time to work in collaboration with their

colleagues, mentors, and student-teachers. Regarding the monitoring mechanism of practicum coordinators, whether tutors and mentors observe, support, and give feedback to student-teachers, practicum coordinators and academic vice dean conduct informal supervision when necessary.

Generally speaking, the biggest issues with the practicum program's execution were the tutors, mentors, and student instructors' lack of dedication and negligence. inadequate college oversight and follow-up with the mentors, tutors, and student teachers; student teachers were not placed in the proper academic area during their practicum; assigning a large number of pupils to a single mentor or tutor Absence of cooperative efforts between school principals, mentors, tutors, and student instructors; The workload of tutors copying portfolio reports from one another, student-teachers Standardization in the practicum program's tutor or mentor selection is lacking.

## Discussion

The main objectives of teaching practice are to give students the chance to demonstrate their mastery of the subject matter and the methodology of imparting it to learners in real classroom situations, as well as to learn the art of teaching in real classroom settings under the supervision of an experienced cooperating teacher; Qazi et al. (2012) conducted research on the function of practicum programs in improving the pedagogical or teaching skills of student-teachers, and their findings indicate that practicum programs are important in this regard. This study demonstrates how the practicum program assisted teachers and students in honing their lesson planning,

classroom management, and subject-relevant teaching aid preparation skills. The practicum is a college course for teacher preparation that gives student teachers hands-on experience with teaching strategies, assessment procedures, and content-effective teaching practices. Students and teachers are supposed to learn how to create lesson plans, instruct, and communicate with other students and teachers in the course of their daily work during the practicum.

The study's conclusions show that the practicum program helped instructors and students learn how to manage the classroom, including how to divide up the class into different groups for group projects, use appropriate assessment techniques, and recognize individual differences. Contrary to Qazi et al. (2012), however, the quantitative and qualitative data show that the practicum program did not adequately contribute to the improvement of the pedagogical skills of the teachers and students. That is, most respondents stated that the teachers and students were unable to create a lesson plan, use the proper teaching resources, and were not confident in their ability to deliver the lesson.

During the practicum program, the pre-service teachers are expected to receive direction, support, and constructive evaluation from the practicum stakeholders, particularly the mentors and tutors. The successful implementation of student-teacher learning is contingent upon the efficient performance of these practicum stakeholders in carrying out their respective duties and responsibilities. By influencing the theoretical explorations of those student teachers, cooperating teachers have a major impact on this. Since student

teachers needed additional assistance with integrating terminology and language use in practicum, it was imperative that interactive dialogues be used throughout the practicum to support their performance in the classroom (Sussbauer, 2013). Student teachers should be assisted in coming to terms with their identity as instructors by cooperating teachers and academic supervisors. They can demonstrate for them how to handle their classes, comprehend the content they are teaching, and meet expectations. According to Gan (2014), contacts between student teachers and academic supervisors, cooperating teachers, and other school personnel were rich. The majority of the time, lesson observation, cooperating teacher mentoring, academic supervisor monitoring, and peer and school communication were beneficial.

It was found by Can (2014) that mentors and tutors do not accompany teachers into their classrooms to observe pupils. They autonomously observe and assess, using their own schedule and methodology. In addition, there isn't a strong system in place at the school to track whether mentors are fulfilling their assigned responsibilities, which include offering the student teachers helpful criticism and assisting with their professional development.

The results of the study indicate that student teachers benefit from regular interactions (M = 1.67, SD =.47), timely feedback (M = 1.6, SD =.48), listening to their ideas and being motivated to act (M = 1.4, SD =.47), and performance assessments by their college tutors and school mentors. This corroborates Gan's (2014) claim that there are rich interactions between student teachers and other school staff members, cooperating

teachers, and their academic supervisors. In addition to the quantitative data, an interview with the practicum coordinator was conducted. Practicum coordinators, who spent the entire time observing student-teacher classrooms, reported that college tutors were not adhering to the requirements set forth by the regional education bureau. However, school mentors follow the criteria and watch student-teacher classrooms. In other words, their dedication is superior to that of tutors. According to a KI (practicum coordinator),

Classroom observation from the tutor and mentor sides was not adequate. The standard set by the Regional Education Bureau to observe student-teacher classroom teaching is three times during the practicum program; mentors and tutors can conduct more observation if it is needed. But especially, college tutors have an additional work load; they have a teaching load at college. Therefore, their observation and evaluation are not up to the expected standard. School mentors support was relatively better because their work load was already covered by student-teachers.

At the core of tutoring, mentors and tutors who assist new teachers in learning from their experiences in the classroom. Teacher educators, or tutors, are also responsible for planning, supervising, assessing, and providing written and oral feedback to student teachers during a day of observation. Consequently, the tutors' professional duties include evaluating the student-teacher classroom practice and offering sufficient assistance all along the way.

In order to adequately educate student teachers for the teaching profession, many program designers emphasize the value of

joint efforts between school communities and teacher education establishments. In support of this, Lenski and Nierstheimer (2006) claimed that "a smooth curriculum for theory to practice and comprehensive development in candidate teacher training are fostered by the collaborative nature of teacher education in college and school partnerships."

The most important elements of the pre-service teacher education curriculum are the practicum experiences. If schools are to provide practicum placements for these learners to teach, then TEIs and schools must work closely together. Consequently, these aspiring educators develop into capable, prepared, and dedicated professionals who can handle the demands of the classroom. This strong collaboration between TEIs and partner schools can be a great help to aspiring teachers when it comes to individual and team teaching (Lenski & Nierstheimer, 2006). In addition to facilitating feedback meetings for student teachers, placement schools and teachers training colleges also facilitated practicum workshops for school mentors and school leaders to discuss the practicum program, as shown in Table 3. The majority of school mentors and tutors felt that the relationship between placement schools and teachers training colleges in planning, managing, and implementing the program was not up to the expectations of the policy.

## CONCLUSIONS

Thus, it is possible to draw the conclusion that there was little cooperation between teacher education colleges and placement schools when it comes to carrying out the practicum program's tasks based on the quantitative and qualitative data shown above. Given this, it is possible to argue that the program's major participants' cooperative efforts were essential to the practicum program's successful implementation. Similar to this, Lenski and Nierstheimer (2006) claimed that "a seamless curriculum for theory to practice and comprehensive development in candidate teacher training are fostered by the collaborative nature of college and school partnerships." This means that in order for pre-service teachers to adapt the theory they acquired in college to the actual setting of a school, there needs to be a strong collaboration between colleges that offer teacher education programs and practicum placement institutions.

According to the majority of tutors and mentors, the practicum program's main obstacles were Some student teachers were careless and ill-prepared for classroom instruction; some mentors used the opportunity to take a nap rather than participating in the day-to-day activities of the student teachers, which ultimately resulted in their receiving similar scores; and some student teachers were not prepared to learn from their mentors. These factors included a lack of adequate time, a high number of student teachers assigned to one tutor and mentor, and exchanging coping portfolios. As one KI (practicum coordinator) put it:

*When teacher training colleges assign t utors for students and teachers, they do not take into account any criteria like educational qualification (academic rank, work experience, etc.), and all academic staff (instructors) have equal rights and claim equal student-teacher*

*status. This is considered a challenge of the practicum program because, to provide better support and equip student-teachers with the right pedagogical knowledge, teachers with higher academic rank and better experience can contribute better and have to give them greater responsibility. Student-teachers show unhappiness during their practicum due to the stress of being overloaded.*

This study suggests that, for most student-teachers, the practicum program has been helpful in connecting college theory to real-world practice, improving pre-service teachers' subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills, acquainting themselves with school cultures, sharing a variety of experiences from mentors and tutors, and giving them confidence to present their ideas in front of students, mentors, and tutors. Nonetheless, this study highlights a number of areas that need to be improved if teachers in elementary schools are to advance their pedagogical competencies.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENTS

The data of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

## DECLARATION

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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