


Factors Affecting Experiential-Learning in University-Based Micro-Teaching in Bangladesh: Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract: *Microteaching courses in English Departments of the universities of Bangladesh are recent additions. This study unleashes the factors that determine the quality of experiential practices of Microteaching in English Department in the universities of Bangladesh, per teachers' perspectives. This qualitative study comprises data taken from six university faculties of six different universities and observation of six classes by addressing Experiential learning theory (Sternberg & Zhang, 2000). Upon thematic analysis of the data, the paper unveils some hindering factors, including the communication gap among academic institutions and many more. Finally, the study recommends interventions to improve the quality of the Microteaching.*

Keywords: Class Observation, ELT, Experiential Learning, Integration of Technology, Microteaching, TEFL, TESOL

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1. Introduction

Improving the quality of teacher education may have a direct impact on the advancement of society in all spheres. Microteaching course, also known as “the Practice Teaching course or Teaching Practicum” (Alamoudi 2021), is typically regarded as an important component of teacher education that provides students a platform to “learn by doing or field-based learning, or experiential learning” (Kalsoom et al. 2019, p.27). Aspiring teachers are enrolled in Practicum courses mostly during their last year of university as a requirement for the pedagogy course; it is a crucial and necessary part of becoming a teacher. “Teaching a group of foreign language learners and receiving feedback that the student teacher has the opportunity to put knowledge and abilities acquired elsewhere to use or develop strategies for managing various aspects of a language lesson” was the definition of practicum as a concept (Koksai and Genc 2019). Much along this line of thought, in practice teaching, the supervisor, mostly referred to as mentor teachers or course instructors plays a crucial function as a resource, advisor, general morale booster, feedback interpreter, and assessor. According to Agudo (2017), the focal point of the teaching practice exercise is supervision. Therefore, the job of supervisors is crucial for assuring quality. It is the responsibility of the supervisors to oversee the student teachers' classes and other tasks during teaching practice, to offer direction and counseling, and to give them feedback so they may assess their performance and make necessary corrections (Ihara 2016; Agudo 2017; Khatib and Rahgoshay 2021).

The objective of teaching practice is to give STs (student-teachers) real-world experience in classrooms; it was specifically designed to improve STs' knowledge of how to create lesson plans, effectively run classrooms, plan activities for entire classes or groups of students, facilitate and monitor students' learning, assess each lesson they deliver, strengthen their plans in light of it, and develop a good ground of the definition of “a teacher” (Tasdemir et al. 2020, p.90; Şahin 2023). Without practical sessions where they might try first before applying in their classes, new Instructors (Student Teachers) find it difficult to adopt a new model of instruction in their profession (Kamhi-Stein 2018). In this sense, by actively participating in teaching, as well as by receiving guidance from their experiences through reflection and discussion centered on this reflection, student teachers develop “artistry” in teaching (Karim et al. 2019, p.193).

However, according to Alnajami (2018), the breaches between what teachers usually do in classes and what the student-teachers/ novice teachers learn in teacher education courses or training sessions are quite vivid in the Micro-Teaching course. There are several studies conducted in the related literature in EFL context to extensively investigate the role of Microteaching course in teacher education, such as Iran (Khatib and

Rahgoshay 2021), Saudi Arabia (Alamoudi, 2021), Indonesia (Yuliani, 2018; Masoumpanah et al. 2020, p.171), and Turkey (İşcan, 2017; Supiyanto et al. 2017, p.25; Tasdemir et al. 2020, p.93; Şahin 2023; Tekin and Tunaz 2023). The common problematic issues revealed in these studies are lack of proper supervision from teacher educators, inappropriate evaluation methods, insufficient logistic support in the classroom, discrepancy between university training and practice in real classes, lack of realism and inadequate practice opportunities, and a lack of affiliation and collaboration between universities and schools, and so on.

Furthermore, Khatib and Rahgoshay (2021) in their qualitative case study examined the advantages and drawbacks of the practicum program. Semi-structured interviews with student teachers and recently graduated student teachers were used to get the data. The results show that the practicum program requires assessment adjustment. Likewise, Tekin and Tunz (2023) conducted a study to examine the perspectives and experiences of thirty-two pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in a practicum in Turkey. With the use of semi-structured interviews and reflection forms, the findings of this qualitative study that some difficulties needed to be addressed, including the mentor teachers' lack of assistance and direction, inadequate feedback, inadequate technology in the classrooms, and a high frequency of idle classes. In another study conducted by Alamoudi (2021), he investigated the perspectives of three Master of Art (MA) TESOL student-teachers regarding the benefits and difficulties they encountered when enrolled in a Teaching Practicum (TP) or Microteaching course at a Saudi university. The study discovered that the restricted length of the teaching period presents a major obstacle; as a result, the most important modification recommended by the participants was to extend the teaching practice period.

Although the above-mentioned studies offered useful insights into the outcome of the implemented practicum in a variety of fields, including ELT (English Language Teaching) and teaching practice experience is essential to the success of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) programs, it has not been thoroughly and thoroughly examined in the literature in Bangladeshi EFL context (Rouf and Mohamed 2016). There is hardly any Bangladeshi research on the Microteaching course of the Department of English. Bangladesh offers a wide range of pre-service teacher preparation programs. In several universities, pre-service teacher education programs both at the undergraduate and graduate levels including TEFL, TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages), and ELT are available in Bangladesh (Akhter and Alam 2016; Chowdhury et al. 2020, p.20). These programs include but are not limited to, "BA in English" (majoring in ELT, TESL, TEFL, TESOL, etc.), "MA in ELT", and "MA in TESOL" (Raqib 2019; Shahidullah and Rahaman 2022). Karim, Kabilan, Rahman, Shahed, and Rahman (2021) stated that the MA programs in ELT, TEFL /TESOL, applied linguistics, etc. are thought to be professional programs for new or aspiring teachers who yearn to be certified English language teachers. (p. 343). Hence, Sultana (2019) suggested that Bachelor's or Master's degree programs in education must modify the training approach of pre-service teachers to make sure that they are capable of implementing many cutting-edge approaches used in schools. English Language Teacher Education Programs in Universities must give student teachers the knowledge necessary to comprehend language teachers' current situations, their needs as professionals, and the way teacher education programs can help them achieve their professional objectives (Celen 2017; Kamhi-Stein 2018). Addressing Nur's (2018) comments, to guarantee the effectiveness and potentiality of Microteaching courses and overall, teacher quality in Bangladesh, dynamic and consistent evaluation is highly required. Nevertheless, Kabilan, Hussin, Zul-Qarnain, Abdullah, Osman, Ismail, Khan, and Zinnah (2017, p.131) showed that Microteaching courses lack critical need analysis, which is a must, to investigate whether students' professional needs for teaching language are fulfilled or not.

The fundamental premise of this study is that by taking into account the issues faced by teachers' course, an effective Microteaching course curriculum might improve the caliber of ELT teachers. Most specifically, this research addressed the issues related to the factors that interrupt the quality of Microteaching and the difficulties (if any) teachers may have faced while conducting Microteaching programs were obtained by conducting interviews during research need to be thoroughly examined and internally assessed, with recommendations for program development. This study sought to answer the following research question:

- Which factors affect the experiential learning practices of Microteaching courses, in the Department of English in the universities of Bangladesh, from teachers' or course instructors' perspectives?

Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on the experiential learning theory because the study is about the factors that affect the experiential learning practices of Microteaching courses, in the Department of English in the universities of Bangladesh, it is framed by the idea of experiential learning. According to McCarthy (2016), experiential learning theory is a learning model for adult development (pp.27-30). He explained that the theory emphasizes the significance of experience and reflection for real learning to occur and incorporates concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Through active participation in real-life teaching through microteaching, student teachers are the adults who are created through learning. The stages of experiential learning theory are included in microteaching, including the utilization of concrete experiences to contextualize instruction, reflective observation through peer reflection, active experimentation through one's teaching, and participation in microteaching (Supiyanto et al. 2021, p.25). Experiential learning theory will frame the investigation of factors inhibiting the Microteaching course's experiential learning practices in the Department of English in Bangladeshi universities, based on the perspectives of the course teachers.

2. Materials and Methods

This study unveils the factors that inhibit the experiential learning practices of Microteaching courses, in the Department of English in the universities of Bangladesh, most specifically within Dhaka Metropolitan city, shedding light on course teachers' perspectives. This paper follows the qualitative method, which is a method of research that looks to investigate and comprehend people's emotions, perceptions, and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.12). Data, collected through semi-structured questionnaires for teachers' interviews (see "Appendix-A") and class observation checklists (see "Appendix-B"), are represented descriptively.

Additionally, Purposive Sampling was done to select two public and four private universities inside Dhaka metropolitan city that offer the Micro-teaching course of the Department of English. Purposive sampling involves the researcher selecting the participants by hand according to the objectives of the study and to suit their particular requirements (Etikan, 2016, p.41). Purposive sampling was used in the case of choosing 1 Microteaching-course-teacher from each university (in total 1*6=6 teachers) for a semi-structured interview through a questionnaire. One class (students' teaching session) of each interviewed teacher (in total 1*6=6 classes) was observed to cross-check the alignment of participants' responses. Interviews were conducted maintaining privacy and anonymity according to participants' convenience, and all interviews were audio recorded. Participants reflected on their experiences based on the facts regarding the Practicum course, their way of conducting that particular course, and the challenges they encountered in the Practicum course followed up by their recommendations. The universities where the study was carried out ensured approval for ethical conduct.

Upon completion of the interviews, the transcripts were coded, categorized, and subjected to a thematic analysis. To better understand the data and make a connection with the responses, the researchers decided to perform the transcriptions themselves. Data collected from the interviews and class observation was analyzed based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis (pp. 87-90); these phases include familiarizing oneself with the data, creating preliminary codes, looking for themes, evaluating themes, defining and labeling themes, and delivering a report. Pseudonyms, such as "U1", "U2", "U3", "U4", "U5", and "U6", were used to refer to the six study locations when the results of the in-depth interviews and class observation were reported. Therefore, the researcher represented the participants from each research location using pseudo names, which are letters in the alphabet (i.e., T1-U1, T2-U2, T3-U3, T4-U4, T5-U5, and T6-U6). Following thematic analysis, this research study's six major themes emerged as follows: *Class Observation: Lack of Professional Commitment and Collaboration, Lack of Student-Teaching Opportunity and Lack of Practicality, Integration of Technology, Limited Course Duration, Lack of Timely Feedback and Absence of Peer Feedback, and Improvisation of Assessment.*

3. Findings and Discussions

The findings through detailed analysis of the interviews and class observation demonstrate the factors that inhibit the experiential learning practices of Microteaching courses, in the Department of English in the universities of Bangladesh, shedding light on course instructors' teachers' perspectives. Each theme is explained below.

Table 1 represents the demographic information of 6 course teachers of Microteaching courses at 6 universities.

No.	Designation; Teaching Experience	Academic Background	Training
T1-U1	Lecturer; 4 years	BA and MA in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching	no formal training, yet, attended seminars and workshops
T2-U2	Assistant Professor; 16 years; taught 8th grade and 12 th grade students	MA in ELT; second MA in TESL; Ph.D. in TESOL	He invited some workshops on 'Giving Feedback Using Technology'; Introducing IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) for English Teachers.
T3-U3	Assistant Professor; 4 years; taught at an English Medium School	BA and MA in English	no formal training; yet, attended seminars and workshops
T4-U4	Associate Professor; 3 years	BA in English; MA in ELT; Ph.D. in ELE	Took training on teaching and attended seminars and workshops. He is an English Language Trainer
T5-U5	Professor; 28 years; taught at English Medium Schools	BA in English and MA in English (Literature); MA, specializing in English Language; Ph.D. in Linguistics; MSS in Media and Communication	Hornby Regional Training on 'Low Resource Classroom'; British Council Trainer Certification Course; Practical Training on WIPO Training Course on Intellectual Property for Government Officials and Lecturers from Tertiary Institutions
T6-U6	Lecturer; 3 years	BA and MA in English	no formal training; yet, attended seminars and workshops

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information

The results of the course teachers' responses to the questionnaire (see "APPENDIX- A") and class observation checklist (see "APPENDIX- B") are presented below.

Class Observation: Lack of Professional Commitment and Collaboration

The findings under the theme 'Class Observation: Lack of Professional Commitment and Collaboration' revealed that students of T2 and T3 observed a large number of classes; whereas, getting only one chance to do demo teaching. Moreover, T4-U4's students were asked to observe two classes at their university or other universities and submit an anonymous class observation report. T3-U3 asked students to observe more or less 10 English-language skill-based classes. Students met teachers only on Sundays during office hours. T3-U3 mentioned, "Each of my students is supposed to observe 12 classes of different teachers of the schools assigned for each of them". Therefore, the findings obtained in the current study may be said to be in accordance with the existing literature that has shown that observation serves as the foundation for one's teaching practice and confidence as a teacher in addition to giving basic notions about what a real classroom looks like (see, e.g., Karim et al. 2019, p.55; Rahman et al. 2019, p.9; Karim et al. 2021, p.45; Khatib and Rahgoshay 2021). The following extracts attest this notion:

"I asked us to do a class observation of 4 classes of 4 levels; school, college, BA, and MA". Students had to observe 4 English teachers' 4 classes (1 class of 1 teacher) from different levels; such as primary, secondary,

higher secondary, and tertiary. Then the STs had to analyze the strengths of the observed classes in 4 observation reports submitted as portfolios. (T2-U2)

However, T2-U2 further added that he faced difficulty when ‘observed’ teachers were reluctant to allow students to observe classes. Regarding class observation of three consecutive classes of other universities, T1-U1 and T5-U5 commented that having no affiliation with schools, colleges, and other universities created problems in the case of class observation and actual teaching. Even the trainee teachers would get employment opportunities if they got the platform to teach at affiliated schools, according to their performance (T1-U1, T5-U5). T6-U6 also experienced the same hassle. He explained how challenging and frustrating it was to convince other university faculties due to the asymmetric semester schedule of universities in Bangladesh. Even though his students showed approval letters given, the authorities refused to trust them. In this regard, he emphasized affiliation among universities and practicing the professional commitment to help future teachers (T6-U6).

Another important finding was the need for collaboration among universities, schools, and colleges, which was revealed in numerous previous studies (see, e.g., Uysal and Savas 2021; Rodríguez et al. 2022, p.43; Shahidullah and Rahaman 2022), indicating that regarding class observation, all the six participants suggested having a university liaison among academic institutions and assurance of teachers’ professional commitment to assist novice-teachers so that class observation would be convenient. To support pre-service ELT practicum and maintain teacher professional and personal development, was found in several studies (see, e.g., Yuliani 2018; Koşar and Bedir 2019; Supiyanto et al. 2021, p.25; Tekin and Tunaz 2023) that faculties and practicum schools should work together actively and effectively. According to their recommendations, mentor teachers and schools should encourage the collaborative character of the faculty-school relationship to promote mutual teacher growth on both a professional and personal level (Sahin, 2023). Likewise, T2-U2 and T3-U3 shared contact information of the external teachers whose classrooms students were assigned to observe and thus, made the class observation surely convenient and hassle-free for the students.

Lack of Student-Teaching Opportunity and Lack of Practicality

The third theme refers to the ‘Lack of Student-Teaching Opportunity and Lack of Practicality’ in utopian Microteaching course curriculum activities. T1-U1 expressed her disappointment saying that 1 mock-teaching session in her course was mostly a disaster; on top of that, there was no opportunity of observing class outside the university. , all 6 faculties of 6 Universities complained about the limited opportunity of conducting practical teaching sessions. T1, T2, T3, and T6 offered only one teaching session whereas T4 and T5 conducted two teaching sessions. However, while observing classes, the researcher witnessed that the students of U1, U2, U3, U4, and U5 had to conduct mock teaching in which their classmates pretended to be students according to the level of the lesson plan, except U5 who had to teach in a real classroom environment during real-teaching sessions. T3-U3 said that her students taught either 1st or 2nd-semester STs who were enrolled in courses that are foundational courses and English language skill-based. While doing class observations in U1, U3, U4, and U6, it was found that during mock teaching, the disguised students and teachers were interacting; but sometimes, the acting seemed quite hilarious because of overacting of some pretended STs. Instead of facing any difficulty, it seemed that everyone was trying to create a favorable atmosphere for those two trainee teachers by interacting quite often which barely happens in real classrooms (T1-U1). One of the mentor teachers explained their thoughts on this as follows:

Although their peers pretended to act like the particular level of STs they expected from them. However, the fact is real teaching does not work like that. Following the university curriculum, the students have to sit for 2 quizzes or mid and final exams and submit 2 assignments on critical analysis of articles that I find no connectivity with teaching. (T1-U1)

The participants’ comments may be said to be in line with the existing literature (see, e.g., Hamid and Erling 2016; Darwish 2017; Gebretinsae and Karvinen 2018). Most of the time, the practicum is “a sorry condition of affairs” (Alamoudi 2021) with little to no benefit & displays a “utopian reality” (Alnajami 2018). Therefore, T3-U3 denied considering this course as a part of teacher training. She said, “TP is just a course. Within 3-4 months

we cannot expect a student to be trained like a teacher... The real classroom is difficult and unpredictable... so, there can be multiple series of courses of TP". However, T5-U5 further added that he asked the students, who are quite competent and confident, to teach ENG 200 (Advanced verbal communication skills) STs, and those, who are less competent comparatively, to teach ENG 100 (Improving oral communication skills) students. He assigned topics to the trainee teachers looking at those spoken courses' course contents, so the teaching session conducted by the trainee teachers helped those spoken courses' STs as well and utilized the limited course duration as well (T5-U5).

Besides, Agudo also added, "...if English language teaching and learning to teach is limited only in the classroom environment, it is undeniably inadequate if it is limited only in the classroom environment" (2017). In this regard, Alnajami (2018) addressed that the mentors stressed that many pre-service English teachers entered the classroom with a solid command of the language, but their pedagogical knowledge of how to use it in the classroom was severely lacking. Although a practicum may include both direct experience of doing teaching and indirect experience of witnessing teaching, the emphasis is frequently on the former, applying what has been learned in the classroom to actual practice as the last step toward becoming a fully qualified teacher (Koksal and Genc 2019).

Integration of Technology

The third extracted theme turned out to be 'Integration of Technology' by both teachers and students in the Practicum course. The classrooms of U2, U3, U4, and U5 were well-equipped; whereas, T1 and T6 were not content with their classroom's lack of logistic support. T1-U1 said that there should be some curriculum reforms in this course. She suggested, "This course would be more empowering if their varsity had a language lab and proper infrastructure was there following the current pedagogy strategy" (T1-U1). Dissatisfaction with mentor teachers was also reported in previous studies in various contexts such as Celen and Akcan (2017) have highlighted the importance of institutional supports that should be put in place to help them fulfill the challenging requirements of training teachers for the 21st century. While observing classes of Practice Teaching course conducted by T1-U1 and T6-U6, the researcher found that the classroom lacked logistic support, including laptop, desktop, multimedia, and sound system. T6-U6 said that the limited logistic support in classroom made the course activities disorganized; the STs had to use the blackboard and marker while teaching their peers once during mock-teaching sessions. The subsequent quotation exemplifies the concern regarding lack of logistic support:

The practical activities, especially teaching practice sessions and logistic support are visibly limited and this factor is creating hindrances to effective teaching practice. Moreover, we are bound to follow traditional methods in the classroom that I find less effective. I am doubtful of the necessity of writing assignments in such a practical course. (T6-U6)

The participants' comments may be said to be coherent with the research by Borg and Edmett (2018, p. 16)), who emphasized that one of the most recent themes in the field of practicum is technology integration, which includes ICT, blended teaching, digital literacy, and online education. This opinion is further supported by the growing use of social media tools, software, and technology during the practicum, as shown by both current and prior studies (see, e.g., Albakri et al. 2021; Balbay 2021). The importance of integrating technology into practicum has further been highlighted by reviews by Brown and Edmett (2020, p.11) on online practicum studies carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic and by Aghabarari and Rahimi (2020) on the technological aspect of practicum. However, the findings from their study showed several other problematic issues during practicum; the technological infrastructure was not sufficient in one of the practicum schools and nine of the participants were negatively affected by this situation. Although they learned how to integrate technology into language teaching employing several ways such as Web 2.0 tools, they were not able to put this knowledge into practice properly (Aghabarari and Rahimi 2020).

Limited Course Duration

Regarding the fourth theme 'Limited Course Duration' T1-U1 revealed a serious concern that their class for that course was called off two months before due to their final exam. Therefore, at that point, there was no activity related to that course going on. In the same vein, T4-U4 also objected that she conducted class half of the semester and the rest three months were wasted either for holidays or due to break before the final exam. "Even if there was no final written exam for that particular course, because of other courses, there was an official final exam break" (T4-U4). Because of the smaller number of classes, the students of both T1 and T4 got only 1 class for peer teaching. This aspect confirms the position put forward by various researchers (see, e.g., Ihara 2017; Köksal and Genç 2019; Koşar and Bedir 2019; Chowdhury et al. 2020, p.17) that the findings indicated a serious problem, trainees had idle classes during practicum, that has a high potential to inhibit the achievement of practicum objectives. The participants (T1, T4) stated that it was obvious that their STs did not benefit from the practicum at all during this period and regarded it as a total waste of time, as they only sat in the classroom silently and did nothing else.

About the comparatively large class size in the case of the Microteaching course, T2-U2 and T5-U5 said that in MA, they got only one class in a week; they had 12 students in their Practicum class and 3 students taught per class during the mock-teaching session; after mock, they started their actual-teaching session. Emphasizing the need to learn what two teaching sessions should actually entail, one mentor (T5) highlighted the duration of Practicum course of mentoring as an important problem to be addressed as indicated in the following extract:

Due to the 4-month semester, the duration is too limited to develop teaching skills through only two teaching sessions. We need more teaching sessions...If we calculate, a student who presented in the first class of the mock-teaching session, s/he would have an actual teaching session exactly after one month. As this is quite a long gap, there is a lack of consistency in their performance and they again become nervous during actual teaching. (T5-U5)

Moreover, T2-U2 thought that training 40 students within 3 hours of class in a week and 4 classes in a month is not enough to produce potential teachers. Therefore, "student numbers per semester should be reduced and more teachers for that course should be assigned in a semester so that students can be divided into groups to be supervised by different teachers" (T2-U2) that happened in U4 which made it easier for T4 to monitor students, giving feedback, and maintaining the quality of his teaching, according to T4-U4's opinion. The recommendation for recruiting teaching assistants that emerged from the teacher's (T3-U3) interview was:

The process can be semi-formal. They can help teachers in assessment and conducting classes, specially-skill-based courses, and checking scripts. It would not only facilitate the teaching assistants making them habituated to the teaching process but also the instructors would also be facilitated as well as their work pressure would be reduced and they could invest more attention to the Microteaching course. (T3-U3)

Regarding the time allotted for the teaching practice program, the majority of participants stated that it is insufficient for the students to practice and have a thorough understanding of both their pedagogical skill and the demands of the teaching profession. They do, however, hit a nerve in that it is challenging to prolong the practice period. Additionally, if the practice period is extended, instructors and STs will find it more difficult to keep up because they are already overburdened with a large number of courses along with Microteaching. As per the result of this study, the participants highlighted the course's problems, particularly the short teaching timeline. This is consistent with the findings of Alamri's (2018) study, which suggested that there is insufficient practice teaching time for EFL student-teachers. For student instructors, having adequate time to practice teaching can be crucial. Before becoming certified instructors, student-teachers need to have enough opportunities to practice teaching, according to Alamri (2018). On the other hand, the researcher while class observing counted that the STs had 20 or 30 minutes to practice teaching. Encouraging more teaching practice time was stated a lot in all of the study's data sources. That makes sense, considering that during their 20-minute practice teaching sessions in university classes, participants in Alamri's (2018) study recommended that decision-makers think about allocating additional time for teaching practice.

Lack of Timely Feedback and Absence of Peer Feedback

The fifth theme was thematically coded as ‘Lack of Timely Feedback and Absence of Peer Feedback’. T3-U3 said that there is no regular class in Practice Teaching course in U3. While observing class, the researcher found that T3-U3 did not prefer feedback immediately after each activity or each class. She preferred one-to-one feedback. She admitted that peer review is important; however, “it does not necessarily be included in the syllabus and invest class time in it; instead, peer review can be informal” (T3-U3). The same case was encountered in classes of three participants (T1, T2, T4). The practicum students of U4 taught considering their peers intermediate-level students; however, they received feedback only from the instructor and there was no scope for peer feedback. After demo-teaching, the STs asked for informal comments from their friends. On the contrary, a different perspective appeared in the following extract; for instance, T5 commented:

Peer feedback would help students when they would be teachers in the future. During guardian meetings, the trainee teachers would be able to provide constructive feedback to students and parents. They would be able to provide the strengths and weaknesses of the students following sandwich feedback.

The participants’ comments reflected the findings of previous studies (see, e.g., Supiyanto et al. 2021, p.25). In a study, Brown et al. (2020) discovered that feedback from university supervisors is more theory-oriented, “evaluative, non-directive, and constructive” (Choi et al. 2016, p.80) than feedback from cooperating instructors, which is more proactive, particularistic, and directive (p. 102). Celen and Akcan (2017) reported that student-teachers benefit from the seminars where they have the opportunity to learn about various school settings, including private and public schools, and that their cooperating teachers’ feedback carries more value because it was pertinent for addressing their most pressing demands.

Besides, T4-U4 and T6-U6 informed that they provided instant feedback on their students’ performance. After the presentation, the teacher took notes, and his students received oral feedback; in assignments, they received written feedback. On the other hand, two of the Microteaching course teachers (T2-U2, T3-U3) emphasized that they arranged seminar sessions to give STs feedback on their performance throughout the activities at the end of the semester. One of the mandatory factors of Practicum, such as ‘timely feedback’ was overlooked by T3, found during class observation. Therefore, the findings obtained in the current study can be said to support the previous findings (see, e.g., Rowan et al. 2019, p.214; Sultana 2019; Tasdemir et al. 2020, p.90; Uysal and Savas 2021; Tekin and Tunaz 2023). According to Kalsoom et al. (2019, p.28), delayed feedback is a major issue in education. She also stated that learners can become demotivated as a result of the delayed response. Even if there may be a lengthy lag in feedback delivery, a mentor cannot possibly remember every crucial detail that needs to be covered to give the student-teachers feedback because they are human (Alamri 2018; Aghabarari and Rahimi 2020; Balbay 2021).

Improvisation of Assessment

The mentors’ reported the need for improvising the assessment system in the Practicum course curriculum was supported by their responses under the sixth extracted coded as ‘Improvisation of Assessment’. The theme signified that a faulty assessment system can lead to unsuccessful practicum outcomes and raise questions about validity and reliability of that particular course. All the participants (T1, T2, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6) ensured the submission of portfolios from the students that included self-reflection reports, peer-reflection reports, lesson plans, and, class observation reports. This finding, however, runs counter to earlier study findings. Writing observation and reflection reports from the viewpoint of student instructors, for instance, is one of the less successful performance measures, according to Alamoudi (2021). T1-U1 and T2-U2 also stated that students submitted an assignment; whereas, T3 and T6 took research paper submissions. Through their active involvement with research, STs in this type of research-based learning have the potential to be supported as intellectual producers (Rouf and Mohamed 2006). Raqib (2019) investigated the efficiency of reflective practice with six pre-service primary teachers who recommended that during the practicum, the pre-service teachers can conduct action research to notice various factors and promote reflection.

Regarding the practicum courses’ inadequacies, this study discovered that the course instructors were dissatisfied with the assessment process “since the practicum course’s primary goal is to teach student

instructors about teaching” (Khatib and Rahgoshay 2021). T1-U1 and T6-U6 admitted that they as conscious teachers did not support 70% marks allocated for the final written exam in this practice teaching course. The participants felt that there should be fewer marks for the written exam. The participants therefore think that altering the distribution of grades could be a wise course of action. The study’s findings are consistent with earlier research investigations carried out in Turkey (Nur 2018; Rahman and Pandian 2018; Rodríguez et al. 2022, p.30; Mutlu-Gülbak 2023). Though theories and methods are memorized for the sake of answering the questions correctly on the exam for employment, they remain as idealistic concepts from ESL contexts that are not connected to real practice in the EFL classrooms; hence, a reexamination of the current pre-service teacher-training curriculum is required to evaluate the balance between test preparation and teaching preparation (Miftah et al. 2022, p.210).

T5-U5 reported that each of the STs got 30 minutes for mock teaching and two sessions of mock teaching occurred in his course. Except for T5-U5, only 1 mock teaching session took place in other informants’ (T1, T2, T3, T4, T6) courses. T1-U1 claimed that there was one mock teaching session occurred in her Practicum course, but at least two teaching sessions were needed; because of the 4 monthly courses, the time was limited. In opposite to this scenario, Masoumpanah et al.’s case study (2017, p.180) on two Iranian novice EFL teachers suggested that assessment should be done twice or more as this will help re-assessing and improving pre-service teachers’ practices after the first and subsequent feedback to determine the improvement and progress. Moreover, the evaluators/ assessors also need to make pre-service teachers more aware of how supervisors conduct the evaluation process and clarification of the validity and evaluation grids used (Linn et al. 2021, p.25).

4. Recommendations and Conclusion

To conclude, this study explored the perspective of teachers in the Department of English in universities of Bangladesh about the challenges teachers encounter in Microteaching courses to help enrich the literature on the Practicum practice in the Bangladeshi EFL context. This study concludes that faculties and ELT teacher education programs should place a high priority on collaboration and close contact with school contexts and their stakeholders to support their student-teachers’ theoretical and practical preparation for real-life English teaching. They should also increase the amount of technology and mentoring that is incorporated into their practicum and curriculum, and they should foster real-teaching practices.

Yet, it should be acknowledged that the current study was limited to the number of the research population and qualitative method in collecting data. Future research needs to widen the scope to include more participants and rely on mixed methods. It is therefore recommended that further research be conducted in the field of course assessment and rubrics and students’ need and employment, to find out the degree of alignment of each course with practicality. In addition, interview and class observation data could be triangulated incorporating the perspectives of both mentor teachers and student teachers to understand the long-term and immediate effects of the design and development of preservice teacher training programs based on contextual expectations. Thus, this study will also facilitate the stakeholders, policymakers, and curricular designers to learn about the shortcomings and recommendations, and improvise the Teaching Practicum course for the betterment of the students and to turn this course into a grand success.

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APPENDIX

Appendix- A: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire for Teachers (Personal information will remain confidential)

Name-	University-	Department-	Course-	Date-
Demographic Information				
Educational background				
Professional background & teaching experience				
Participation in any teacher training program (if any?)				
Course-related Information				
What type of materials do you use and contents do you cover in Practice Teaching course?				
What type of activities do you conduct in your classes?				
Do you think peer feedback play significant role on students' teaching session?				
What types of rubrics do you follow to grade students in Practice Teaching course and do you familiarize students with the rubrics?				
How do you provide feedback to your students in Practice teaching course?				
How do you let your students integrate technology in classes?				
Do you think the Practice Teaching course aligns with the real-teaching practices?				
Do you think course objectives and learning outcomes of the course are justified?				
What are the strengths and weaknesses of the practice teaching course, according to you?				
Do you face any challenges while conducting the Practice Teaching course?				
Do you have any recommendation to overcome the challenges and prevent the shortcomings of the Practice Teaching course?				
Topic-related Further Information				
What is your opinion on contribution of Practice Teaching course towards students to be Teachers after finishing MA/BA degree having no formal training experience?				
Do you think Practice Teaching course offered by university can outweigh/ replace the formal teacher training programs?				

Appendix-B: Class Observation Checklist; Instructor-

Date-

Time-Class Observed- Department- Number of Students-Observer-

Observation Criteria	Observation Comments
1.Greetings	
2.Warm-up session	
3.STT vs. TTT; S-T & S-S interaction	
4.Fluency & accuracy	
5.Methods/ approaches/ techniques used by teachers	
6.Materials used	
7.Contents covered	
8.Group/ pair/individual tasks/ activities	
9.Teacher's role	
10.Feedback/ assessment/ evaluation	
11.Homework	
12.Technology used	
13.Time management	