

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses background of the current study which is the basis for conducting the study, research questions consisting phenomenon to which this study focuses on, aims of study providing guidance on which this study embarks on, scope of the research referring to research's boundary which is a means of giving limitation to the study, significance of the research comprising the possible outcome of the current study, clarification of the study describing key terms of the study and organization of paper comprising general descriptions by which the study is reported.

1.1 Background

The studies of pre-service education for teaching practice have sparked a number of insightful phenomena in the realm of teacher education. The subject matter has been considered highly significant and it has been considered as an important feature in preparing student teachers to enter a practice setting (Farrel, 2003 in Gan, 2013, p. 1). Regarding this, it is generally recognized that the notion of integrating field practicum in teacher education programs is an important element in pre-service teachers' groundwork. The importance of incorporating field-based experience into university-based coursework has been identified by numerous studies. Such a study is that of Hudson and Hudson (2012) which argued that teaching practice benefits pre-service teachers as it provide them an opportunity to integrate theories learned in a teacher training institute into practice (Hudson & Hudson, 2012, p. 12; see also Tuli & File, 2009, p. 111-12; Hacımeroglu, 2013, p. 132). It is also worth pinpointing that not only does field experience aid student teachers to combine both theory and practice, but it also

allows them to “generate new insight and understanding about issues confronting society today” (de la Piedra, Munter, Girón, 2006, p. 75).

In relation to the aforementioned studies, numerous studies have prevailed to present a striking impression on providing real-life teaching experience challenges experienced by ESL and EFL student teachers. The existing research includes a study carried out by Gan (2013) which found out that there is discrepancy between expected results of theories learned in teacher training institutes and actual practice in field practicums (Gan, 2013, p. 98-102). The study further stated that classroom management was the main difficulty in the field experience and therefore went to suggest that improvement over the English course for pre-service teachers need to be undertaken (Gan, 2013, p. 105). Another significant study is Numrich’s whose findings indicated time management was perceived as the major obstacle in field practicum (Numrich, 1996, p. 142).

However good the impression left by field experience for pre-service teachers is, the focus of many research regarding second or language teaching and learning has not been shifted to cases revolving around field experience. That is, the research field has yet to exclusively recognize the case as a distinguished feature of L2 teacher education as much attention has been given to research addressing teaching methodology, which includes procedure and technique for developing a good teaching practice.

In a nutshell, a large number of studies have corresponded to address the divergence of expected outcomes of teacher education and real-life experience, trying to find out general sustainability of student teachers preparation when it comes to teaching practice and the discrepancy between pre-service and in-service teachers beliefs of field practicum (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1050; Haciomeroglu, 2013, p. 132; Fox, Campbell, Hargrove, 2011, p. 38). However, little has been done to conduct a study that addresses challenges pre-service teachers encounter during a field practicum from second or foreign language learning perspective,

especially for the case occurred to non-native prospective EFL teachers. It is also important to note that among the few studies, one can hardly find any studies which embrace the reflection and perception of the non-native pre-service EFL teachers on the difficulties encountered in the field experience. Therefore, the current study stands to give a new different perspective in developing professional teachers in which new insights and information regarding challenges encountered by pre-service teachers in field practicum can be discovered.

1.2 Research Questions

This part provides questions which are the foci of the proposed study. There are three questions which are going to be thoroughly investigated and, therefore, answered in the current study. The questions are as follows:

1. What challenges do pre-service teachers experience during field practicum?
2. What might contribute to the challenges experienced by pre-service teachers during field practicum?
3. How do pre-service teachers overcome the challenges experienced during field practicum?

1.3 Aims of the Research

In accordance with the aforementioned research questions, the current study attempts to investigate:

1. Challenges encountered by pre-service teachers during field practicum
2. Aspects contributed to the challenges encountered by pre-service teacher during field practicum
3. Strategies used by pre-service teachers to handle the challenges encountered during field practicum.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This research focuses on investigating the following aspects: (1) challenges experienced by pre-service EFL teachers when conducting field practicum, (2) aspects contributed to the challenges encountered, and (3) strategies employed by pre-service EFL teachers to overcome the challenges faced. The current study emphasizes on investigating the phenomena through pre-service teachers' perspectives.

1.5 Significance of the Research

There are two major perspectives geared toward implications of the current study: theoretical point of view and practical point of view. In the realm of theoretical perspective, it is assumed that the exploration of the pre-service teachers' challenges and strategies faced during field experience, if disseminated, will be useful to supplement the underlying theoretical frameworks adopted in teacher education programs. As for the practical perspective, it is expected that the study can provide insightful and thoughtful considerations for pre-service and in-service teachers as building bricks to improve their professional development, particularly in defining, examining, and reflecting upon the challenges experienced.

In relation to the intention of the study which is to explore the aforementioned phenomena, it is hoped that the study can provide the key to unlock further research on challenges faced by student teachers when conducting field practicum. It is therefore endorsed that the current study can support research on the case afterwards, including but not limited to studies describing and explaining the phenomena occurred.

1.6 Clarification of Related Terms

There are some main key terms recognized in the study; the terms are, as follows:

1. Foreign Language

Foreign languages are defined as languages learned as a compulsory part of curriculum which are not used for immediate practical usage (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 4).

2. Pre-service Teacher

Pre-service teachers refer to students enrolled and trained in a teacher training institute or university offering the same course (Freeman, 2009, p. 12). In addition, there is another term interchangeably used to refer pre-service teachers: student teachers.

3. Challenge

Challenges, recognized in the current study, refer to any difficulties or concerns pre-service teachers have during teaching practicum.

4. Field Practicum

Field practicums are programs in a curriculum providing students a chance to put the theoretical frameworks built in a class into practice (The University of Texas at Austin, 2013). In this study, the term field practicum exclusively refers to internship in which the student teachers carry out the teaching practice “at the end of the college courses” (Wallace, 1991, p. 122). The terms field practicum in this study is also referred to as field experience.

5. Mentor Teacher

Mentor teachers, in the present study, refer to teachers in placement schools whose job is to support professional development of pre-service teachers during field practicum (Malderez, 2009, p. 259-60).

6. Supervisor

Supervisors are university lecturers assigned by a teacher preparation institute to observe and assess pre-service teachers' teaching practice and to give feedback to student teachers' on their teaching performance (Malderez, 2009, p. 260).

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This part represents a body of works the current study is based upon. The works comprises of five main parts addressing different subjects. Further description of each part is, as follows:

1. Chapter 1 comprises background of the study conveying brief interwoven correlation between the current research and existing frameworks on which the current study is based upon, statement of problem consisting what phenomenon the study is trying to describe, purpose of the current study describing general goal of the study, scope of research clarifying boundaries the study is within, significance of research referring to the implications of the study, both theoretically and practically, and clarification of key terms comprising specific definitions of important terms used in the study.
2. Chapter 2 addresses foundation of the study which is the review of existing frameworks and theories underlying the study. In addition, the chapter conveys sound analysis on the phenomenon in regard to previous research interwoven with the current study.
3. Chapter 3 describes detailed research methodology engaged in the study. The chapter, generally, recalls the problem the current study is trying to be involved with as well as speaks of thorough justification on research methodology in the study.

4. Chapter 4 conveys comprehensive description of the collected data, sound analysis on the data, and ample interpretation of the data based on the data's correlation with the current study's aim, hypothesis, and underlying theories and frameworks.
5. Chapter 5 consists of three parts: the first part is *conclusion* which describes the current study in a nutshell; the second part is *limitation* which covers constraint(s) demonstrated in the present study; the last part is *suggestion* which gears toward implications of the current study.

