

# STUDENT-TEACHERS'S PERSPECTIVES OF PRACTICUM PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

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## Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the student-teachers' perspectives of practicum experiences and challenges. The study included all student-teachers at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan who enrolled in practicum/2 course in the second semester of the academic year 2012/2013. A quantitative questionnaire consisted of 41 items was administered on (71) student- teachers of early childhood education and classroom teacher majors. The findings of the study revealed that the participants have benefited from the practicum practices in the development of many teaching skills such as: the interaction and communication with students and classroom management skills. However, both classroom student-teachers and early childhood student-teachers highlighted certain common challenges they encountered during their practicum experience. Implications and future recommendations were discussed.

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**Keywords:** Student-teachers, perspectives, practicum practices, challenges

## Introduction

Education is considered as the nation's important tool for achieving more progress and development in the changeable world. Practicum experience is considered as one of the core and central element of Pre-service Teacher Education Programs (PTEP) that provide student-teachers with the opportunity to examine the knowledge they gained during the theoretical study journey and put this knowledge into action. This opportunity is a real chance for the student to experience the real environments of teaching process, its complexity, and challenges that may impede the process of implementing the school curriculum. According to

Harian (2012) the teaching profession occupies the fourth place in the list of stressful professions (As cited in Jusoh, 2012). Therefore, this profession, especially in the first years, needs more efforts from the teacher in order to avoid any frustrating experience and to create awareness of school environment.

Training prospective teachers through practicum is a vital part of the PTEP (Perry 2004; Quick & Sieborger, 2005; Maphosa, Shumba, & Shumba, 2007), because it is the first opportunity that student-teachers have to experience the real teaching practices (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). According to Tuli and File (2009) practicum allows student-teachers to discover their abilities and creativities that help them in their future teaching processes. In addition, they demonstrated that practicum helps student-teachers to understand the real world of teaching and let them know about problems and difficulties of teaching that may face them in the future. With same sense, Smith and Lev-Ari (2005) pointed out that practicum assists student-teachers to understand their students' environment, and accept students' pluralism and difference. In addition, they asserted that practicum develops the positive attitudes of student-teachers towards the profession and towards their students, as well. Furthermore, practicum: 1) develops student- teachers' behaviors and practices in the teaching processes, 2) provide them with educational primary efficiencies and a clear understanding of the context of the school, 3) enables them to recognizes the reality of students' learning needs, 4) plays a key role in bridging the gap between theory and practice, and 5) develops their professional and personal competencies (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). Laurentian University (2011) and University of Newcastle (2010) addressed that PTEP aims to provide opportunities for student-teachers to employ knowledge, information, and theories that they gained during their study journey in the real classroom environment. In addition, practicum experience enables them to achieve the integration between the theoretical, the practical, and empirical knowledge.

In Jordan, the practicum program in higher education institutions has a clear, distinct role in preparing prospective teachers. For example, the University of Jordan addressed several objectives of this experience in the practicum booklet guide. The objectives of the practicum have inclusive aspects and dimensions such as the cognitive, skillful, and psychological dimensions. So, the University of Jordan practicum aims to provide student-teachers with a range of skills and competencies of teaching such as preparing the daily plans and long-term plans, managing classroom, employing teaching strategies and teaching aids, interacting and communicating with students, evaluating student's learning, forming positive attitudes towards the profession and towards the students themselves, and

identifying and respecting laws and regulations (Guide of the University of Jordan PTEP, 2013).

The above mentioned facts confirm the significance of the practicum program, as it is the vital part of PTEP that provides student-teachers with knowledge, experience, leadership, and resources that effectively prepare them for their future teaching profession successfully. Also, it urges them to reflect on their practices in the profession of education, and develop their human values and practical skills. Furthermore, it makes sure that all student-teachers have gained standards of practicum, and provides them with opportunities to experience real teaching environment to develop their teaching skills. Throughout practicum experience, student-teachers are introduced to elements of schools' culture and its interactions, which help them, to form and review their own teaching philosophy. Also, it provides student-teachers with opportunities to discuss the practical teaching experiences with specialists, and thus, link the theoretical aspect of these experiences with the practical one (Guide of PTEP, 2013).

As the line that has been arguably attributed to Kant says “theory without practice is empty; practice without theory is blind” (Morrison & Werf, 2012, p. 1), we, as researchers, believe that practice is a tool that illuminates the teacher's teaching methods that guide students to be involved in meaningful learning events and experiences. According to Lingam (2002) and Williams (1994) the success of teachers does not depend on only theoretical knowledge, but also it depends on meaningful practicum that provides them with necessary skills and behaviors that develop their teaching practices. So, it is crucial to highlight the student-teachers' perspectives regarding this practical experience.

### **Research Problem**

Due to the rapid changes, the development of modern teaching and learning theories, and the emerged issues related to students' performance in core subjects such as language and mathematics, it is necessary to act in accordance with a new vision to train student-teachers and provide them with new teaching skills and experience in real school environment (Ramsey, 2000). In this regard, a study was conducted by the Ministry of Education in Jordan (MoE) in collaboration with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). This study has pointed out that there is a numerous number of Jordanian students in the first three elementary grades who do not know how to read and do not master the basic language skills that their counterparts have. In addition, it has found that 49% of students from second grade and 45% of students in the third grade did not know how to read new vocabularies. Further, 27 % of second graders and 22 % of third grade students did not understand the reading texts. Furthermore, there is an

obvious weakness in mathematical skills due to the implemented teaching methods that focus on superficial acquisition of knowledge rather than teaching for meaningful learning (The MoE and USAID, 2013). These horrible results confirmed the urgent need for schools teachers, who teach the first three grades' students that graduated from the Faculty of Educational Sciences, did not involve in an effective practicum experience that enables them to gain effective teaching skills. So, we think that a weak practicum experience affected, negatively, the first three grades students' performance and achievement. Thus, this study attempts to shed light on the current implemented practices during university practicum experience and its challenges from student-teachers' perspectives.

The attention toward practicum experience is needed due to the multiplicity and overlapping roles of the members who are involved in the practicum. In addition, much of what is happening with the student- teacher in or outside the classroom remains unknown (Crookes, 2003). This could happen, either due to the lack of visits from supervisors or advices given from cooperative teachers. In addition, very little is known about the nature of the assistance provided to the student-teacher from the cooperative teacher and the academic supervisor when he/she encounters a problem or a particular challenge. Student-teachers should be carefully guided by the cooperative teacher and academic supervisor to help them gain more knowledge and experiences in dealing with the classroom environment and children.

According to Allagany, Fareah, and Radwan (1990) student-teacher's perspective regarding the system of practicum is crucial. So, this study aims to uncover the reality of practicum from the student-teachers' perspectives. Investigating student-teachers' perspectives is vital because these students interact with all members in the teaching field such as cooperative teacher, academic supervisor, school personnel, and children. So, their insights can help stakeholders, cooperative teacher and academic supervisors to understand their needs in order to improve the culture of practicum. Specifically, this study aimed to understand the reality of practicum experience from the perspectives of students-teachers at Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan. In addition, it aimed at exploring students-teachers' challenges during their practicum experience. In particular, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the student-teachers' perspectives of practicum practices?
- 2- What are the challenges faced by student-teachers during practicum experience?
- 3- Are there statistical differences of student-teachers' perspectives of the practicum practices related to the student-teacher's specialization,

university Cumulative Average (CA), and their Average in General Secondary School Certificate Exam (AGSSC)?

- 4- Are there statistical differences of student-teachers' challenges related to the student-teacher's specialization, university Cumulative Average (CA), and their Average in General Secondary School Certificate Exam (AGSSC)?

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aimed at investigating the real context of practicum practices as experienced by the student-teachers of the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan. Further, it attempted to highlight the challenges that the student-teachers face in the practicum. In addition, this study investigates whether the student-teachers' perspectives differ according to the students' specialization, CA, and AGSSCE.

### **Research Importance**

The significance of this study emerges from the importance of practicum experience itself, its role in teacher preparation programs which aims to develop the educational competencies of student-teachers, and its ability to diagnose the challenges faced by student-teachers during practicum. In addition, this study is vital because it considers the perspectives of student-teachers who are directly affected by the practicum quality and the nature of guidance. Furthermore, the results of this study may draw attention to several problems and challenges faced by the student-teachers. So, this study attempts to share these issues that may help the educational stakeholders to minimize challenges' impact and to facilitate the training process to achieve the goals of practicum experience for prospective student-teachers in other higher education institutions that may have similar issues.

### **Limitations**

The study was administered on student-teachers of early childhood education and classroom teacher specialization from the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan. All of them were enrolled in practicum/2 course in the second semester of the academic year 2012/2013. Generalization of the study findings is limited based on the instruments used to collect data and psychometric properties of reliability and validity.

### **Research Variables**

Independent variables: There are three independent variables:

1- Specialization of the student-teacher which has two levels: the classroom teacher, and early childhood education.

2- AGSSCE: Average in General secondary school certificate examination. In this study it has three levels: less than 75%, from 75% and less than 85%, and more than or equal 85%.

3- CA: Cumulative Average at University: the total cumulative average the students have at university level. For the purpose of this study it has three levels: less than 2.0 points, from 2.0 and less than 3.0 points, and more than or equal 3.0 points.

The dependent variables: there are two dependent variables: 1) the context of practicum practices, and 2) the challenges faced by student-teachers during practicum.

### **Research Procedural Definitions**

Practicum: A program that provides a meaningful field experience offered by the Faculty of Educational Sciences. It is applied as part of teacher preparation program. Practicum is designed to allow student-teachers to recognize the reality of the educational process through the application of theoretical courses taught at the university (Guide of PTEP-University of Jordan, 2013). In this study, practicum is the period that student-teachers spend at schools, and practice actual teaching. Practicum includes three phases: observation, partially teaching participation, and solo teaching.

Student-teacher: The student in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, who practice teaching through practicum experience in the first or second semesters of the last year last year of their study. For the purpose of this research, the participants' specializations: Are classroom teacher, and early childhood education.

The cooperative teacher: The teacher who officially works at the cooperative school and his/her role is to accompany student-teacher in the classroom, and offers him/her a help and guidance during the practicum.

Challenges: Problems faced by student-teacher during his/her practicum (in and outside the classroom) and prevent or weaken the implementation of practicum experience effectively

### **Literature Review**

Although practicum has a vital component in teacher preparation, the practicum role is still dialectical among scholars and educators. It occupies a large area in the educational literature (Schulz, 2005). Vick (2006) pointed out that the new trends in teacher education programs focus on the investigation of the problems associated with the training of student-teachers. So, the study programs of teacher education in the university level should include interesting activities that provide students with a realistic experience

for future teaching (Jusoh, 2011). McNamara (1992) noted that 80% of the practicum experience took place in the school environment. This gives students the chance to act and make the right decision at the right time. Consequently, practicum has a positive effect on student-teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession. This cannot be achieved without a support and cooperation from cooperating teachers in the field (Ngoh & Tan, 2000). Farrell (2008) declared that the most important factors that affect student-teachers' practicum experience is the cooperative teachers and peers who spend most of the time with the student-teacher. In this regard, Ong, Ros, Azlian, & Sharnti (2004) reported that when student-teachers have high level of pressure during practicum experience they do not engage positively in the teaching process. In addition to practicum stress, supervision and administrative workload are examples of practicum defect issues.

Practicum programs vary from an educational institution to another. For example, in Domestic Training College in Battersea in Britain, student-teachers have a full-time training at schools. During their practicum, they need to observe cooperative teachers in several class sessions, and after that they should discuss together the teaching practices experienced in the classrooms. In addition, the student-teachers are assigned to perform some lessons; with the guidance of expert teachers from schools other than the one they do their practicum in (Battersea Domestic Training College, 1930). In South Australia, Colleges of Education send their student-teachers to schools one day a week, for a period of 14 weeks. The student-teachers observe and critique teaching practices of cooperative teachers. Then, they send the students one day a week to practice teaching under the supervision of cooperative teachers (South Australia- Department of Education, 1920). In China, the practicum starts at the beginning of the fourth year and for a period ranging from 8 to 10 weeks, and the number of credit hours ranging from 4 % and less than 6% of the number of credit hours (Chen & Mu, 2010). In Singapore, a period of practicum is up to 22 weeks spread over the four years of the study (Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013).

At the University of Jordan, student-teachers' practicum includes 12 credit hours (9.1%) of the total study journey. The practicum is consisted of 2 sections: 1) Practicum (1)/Theory; that is a 3 credit course that discusses issues related to the practical issues from the field. It serves as an introduction to practicum (2), and 2) Practicum (2) /Practice, that is a 9 credit hours that spent by the student-teachers in schools. In this course the student-teachers spend 16 weeks (5 days each week) in the school to live the experience of teaching in the real world. Throughout this semester the student-teachers meet in the university setting for specific meetings where they discuss issues and questions from the field. In the semester of practicum (2) the university supervisors assign students to spend their practicum in

specific schools. During the practicum the student-teachers gradually involve in the teaching process. They begin as observers in the assigned classrooms where they observe to capture the context and benefit from the cooperating teacher's daily practices. Then, they start to partially teach lessons under the supervision of academic supervisors from the university in collaboration with the cooperative teachers and school principals. At the end of the practicum, their performance is evaluated by cooperative teachers (10%) and the academic supervisors (90%) (Guide of PTEP-University of Jordan, 2012).

Some previous research discussed practicum issues and obstacles. For example, Jusoh (2011) conducted a study aimed to examine the problems that faced student-teachers in PTEP at the University of Sultan Zainal Abidin in Malaysia. In-depth interviews were conducted with two student-teachers who completed their practicum. The results showed that student-teachers have faced a variety of challenges, some were personal challenges related to the students themselves, while other challenges were associated with teaching. In addition, Manzar-Abbas and Lu (2013) analyzed PTEP in China and conducted a comparative study of practicum experiences in ten universities. The results asserted three key issues: the duration of practicum, timing, and methods of practicum. Researchers pointed out that the duration of practicum in China is very short, the time of sending student-teachers to the field is not appropriate. More importantly, the implemented methods in the practicum are outdated. The researchers' recommendations included increasing the duration of practicum and sending student-teachers to do their field practicum earlier.

When it comes to practicum practices, previous studies discussed the complexity of these practices. For example, Yasin's (2004) study aimed to highlight the academic supervisors' practices during practicum experience at the University of Al Aqsa by implementing analysis systems method. The study sample represented 50 % of the study community. The sample was selected randomly and consisted of 230 students from different specializations: Mathematics, Science, Arabic, English, Social Studies, and Art Education. The results showed that the academic supervisors do not hold regular meetings with student-teachers to discuss the challenges that faced them during the practicum. In addition, student-teachers 1) cannot find adequate encouragement from the academic supervisors for their work, 2) do not find adequate assistance in getting textbooks and teachers' guides, 3) do not receive adequate explanation of the required practicum skills, and 4) do not get an appropriate guidance to motivate them to implement classroom activities. However, Lingam (2002) studied the factors that positively or negatively affect the preparation of novice student-teachers. A questionnaire was distributed to 106 student-teachers from the Faculty of Fiji. The results



showed that there are gaps in the preparation of student-teachers, and that there are 10 out of 17 factors that affect the preparation of student-teachers negatively. Some of the most important factors were: the duration of the practicum, reflection time spent by student-teachers, and the provision of learning resources. One of the most important factors that affected student-teachers negatively was the lack of guidance provided by cooperative teachers and academic supervisors. With the same line of thought, Hammad's (2005) study aimed to understand the reality of practicum in Al-Quds Open University in Gaza Governorates. This study included 134 students who enrolled in the practicum program. The results showed that the highest factor that affects the practicum experience was related to the academic supervisor while the lowest factor was related to the effect of cooperative school. Also in Gaza, Yassin (2002) studied the problems faced by the students at the Faculty of Education in Gaza during their practicum. A questionnaire was applied and distributed to 313 students, and used a trends' scale towards practicum. The results showed that the problems related to the student-teacher characters were ranked first. In addition, student-teachers faced several problems such as: 1) the long distance between the practicum assigned school and the students' houses, 2) the lack of guidance provided by school principals regarding the school systems, regulations, and the participation in the school activities, and 3) the lack of respect showed from cooperative teachers toward student-teachers.

Another study was conducted by Al-Ajez and Hallas (2011). The study investigated the practicum practices at the Faculty of Education in the Islamic University in Gaza. Specifically, it 1) identified the role of the academic supervisor, cooperative teacher, and school administrators, and 2) declared the most important problems faced the student-teachers. A questionnaire was applied on 183 male and female students. The results showed that there are no statistically significant differences regarding the role of cooperative teacher, academic supervisor, school director, and student cumulative average, while there are statistically significant differences in favor of academic specializations. Further, the results showed that the most important problems facing the student-teachers are the lack of availability of specific educational methods, and the lack of school administration support for the student-teachers.

Due to the complicated context of practicum programs the previous studies discussed many aspects of practicum. One of these aspects was the need of developing practicum program. In their study, Al bannge and Murad (2003) aimed to propose a vision for practicum program. To do so, a survey was applied on 109 faculty members and academic supervisors. The results of this study showed that academic supervisors were not enthusiastic about the idea of involving the school principals and cooperative teachers in the

process of students' supervision because the process of supervision is the responsibility of the assigned academic supervisor. Also, practicum supervisors mentioned that there is no need to let student-teachers involve in the partially teaching process. In addition, the results showed a consensus in the visions of faculty members and the supervisors on the proposed roles of the academic supervisor.

With the same line of thought, the study of Al-Shehri (2003) aimed to develop the practicum program at the Faculty of Education in the University of Taiz based on the contemporary needs. The study suggested that practicum development should: 1) involve a larger number of qualified cooperative to train student-teachers to be qualified teachers in the educational field, 2) reconsider the current practicum practices in terms of effective planning and implementation, 3) put a conceptualization of educational required competencies for practicum program. The study's sample consisted of 70 faculty members and 15 faculty administrators. The results of the study emphasized on the need of the educational competencies for more competent knowledge in educational pedagogy, psychology, and curriculum and content knowledge during student-teachers practicum. Further, the study of Al Naji (2000) explored the students' evaluation of practicum program at the University of Mutah in Jordan. The sample consisted of 122 students from graduates of PTEP. The participants pointed out that the program has (35 out of 40) competencies that were provided by the program. In addition, they reported that their acquisition of these competencies was fair. The study recommended more focus on the practical aspects of the applied practicum.

On the other hand, Conway (2002) aimed to evaluate music education teachers' preparation and rehabilitation program. The standpoints of graduate students, academic supervisors, and administrators were investigated to determine the most valuable and least valuable components of the program. The participants were given the opportunity to write down their suggestions for improving the program. The results indicated that the most valuable program's components are the practicum experience and teaching methods course. However, the least valuable components of the program were the theoretical courses. Participants suggested that the program should focus more on classroom management, and teaching methods for elementary grades. In addition, they requested to increase the period of practicum for a full year rather than one semester.

The above studies highlight the growing attention to the quality of pre-service teachers' preparation programs and the rehabilitation of both pre-service and in-service teachers. These studies recommended further research in the field of practicum programs. As a result, this research aims to investigate the perspectives of both classroom teachers and early childhood

education student-teachers at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Jordan. It attempted to add to the previous literature by highlighting the implemented practicum practices of student-teachers and the challenges that they face during the practicum experience.

### **Methodology**

This research followed the descriptive analytical methodology by implementing a developed questionnaire for achieving this purpose.

### **Participants**

The study included of all student-teachers at the Faculty of Educational Sciences who enrolled in practicum/2 course in the second semester of the academic year 2012/2013. A questionnaire was administered on (71) student- teachers of early childhood education and classroom teacher majors.

### **Instrument**

Related literature was reviewed by the researchers. Further, a group of student-teachers who enrolled in practicum/2 course were interviewed to learn about the dimensions of practicum practices, and the expected challenges from students' perspectives. As a result, the researchers developed a quantitative questionnaire consisted of 45 items distributed into two dimensions. The first dimension focused on the real teaching practices as noticed by the student-teachers during their practicum/2 course. This dimension included (27) items. The second dimension focused on the challenges that may be faced by the student-teachers from their perspectives. This dimension included (14) items. The questionnaire used Likert scale (strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1). All of the questionnaire paragraphs were written in positive statements.

### **Validity**

Questionnaire validity was verified by (8) arbitrators. The research instrument was distributed to academic practicum supervisors and faculty members. Arbitrators highlighted several comments and suggestions regarding wording, readability of items, and belonging to the main domain. The experts added, deleted, and modified what they see fit. Items of the questionnaire were modified based on opinions of the majority of the arbitrators. The final edited draft has consisted of (41) items.

### **Reliability**

The reliability was ascertained by test-retest on (20) students out of the participants. The stability of reliability was calculated through Pearson's

Correlation Coefficient between the two applications. The calculated value was 0.85. Internal Consistency was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient 0.88. These results guided the researchers to pursue conducting the study.

### Statistical Treatment

Researchers recorded all the participants' responses and used SPSS to analyze data. The averages and Standard Deviations were calculated. A three-way ANOVA test was conducted to determine significance of differences between the AGSSCE and CA of student-teachers.

### Results and Discussion

To facilitate judging the extent of the practicum challenges (its difficulty), the recorded challenges were classified into three categories based on the arbitrators' agreement. As a result, the challenge was considered simple among the category of averages (1-1.99), moderate among the category of (2-2.99), and within the category (3 -4) is a big challenge.

*The first research question is:* What are the student-teachers' perspectives of practicum practices? To answer the question Averages and Standard Deviations were calculated as shown in Table (1).

Table (1): Averages and standard deviations of the student-teachers' perspectives of practicum practices

No.	Paragraph	Mean	Std. Deviation
2	I developed my skills in a positive interaction and communication with students	3.7183	0.45302
28	During practicum, I learned the appropriate classroom management skills	3.6761	0.47131
1	Practicum developed my skills	3.6338	0.48519
3	Practicum increased my knowledge and respect for the school laws and regulations	3.6	0.49344
40	Practicum developed my communication skills with colleagues	3.5915	0.54974
8	I practiced the teaching profession, as a result of the well practicum	3.5493	0.52885
4	Practicum helped me to diversify my teaching strategies and methods	3.5352	0.60547
27	Through practicum, I've learned the adequate preparation of daily/quarterly plans	3.5352	0.5814
11	In general, I was satisfied with myself during the Practicum	3.493	0.60647
17	The instructor of the practical education course provided me with feedback that I needed in the Practicum	3.4507	0.73268

32	The Cooperative teacher introduced me to his/her class students that I taught them during my practicum, and encouraged them to cooperate with and respect me	3.4366	0.71179
15	The cooperative teacher has good knowledge and skills that helped me in the Practicum	3.3803	0.6626
34	The cooperative teacher was flexible and took into account my needs enough during practicum	3.3803	0.6626
16	The cooperative teacher's feedback helped me during Practicum	3.338	0.69578
19	With the help of the cooperative teacher, I learned to work and cooperate with others during the practicum	3.3099	0.5998
35	The cooperative teacher encouraged me to ask questions that helped me to develop my skills in practicum	3.3099	0.68851
37	The instructor of the practical education course explained to me, from the beginning, what was expected of him and what was expected of me as a result of practicum	3.3099	0.66744
5	In a timely manner, the cooperative teacher provided the facilities and the necessary and appropriate means in the practicum	3.2817	0.70068
6	practicum helped me to prepare educational software that support teaching	3.2676	0.75513
13	Cooperative teacher enhanced my experiences during Practicum	3.2676	0.71629
7	practicum focused on the necessary skills for the process of education	3.2535	0.62606
18	The method of evaluation my skills in the Practicum was fair and appropriate	3.2535	0.57863
31	Cooperative teacher facilitated the teaching process and made it fun for me	3.2394	0.64287
41	Practicum developed my communication skills with parents of the students.	3.2394	0.74575
25	The cooperative teacher showed me the required tasks appropriately	3.1549	0.76808
29	The cooperative teacher used modern means and tools to develop my teaching experiences	3.0704	0.93081
10	Practicum focused on the theoretical knowledge more than the applied knowledge	2	0.86189
<b>practices</b>		<b>3.341681</b>	<b>0.352711</b>

As Table (1) shows, the total average of the real context of practicum practices was (3.341681). The details of Table (1) indicate that the highest average (3.7183) was given to the paragraph that stated: *"my skills were developed through positive interaction and communication with students"*. The following average was (3.6761): *"during my practicum, I learned the skills of classroom management appropriately"*. Further, the following paragraph: *"during the practicum, I developed my expected teaching*

*skills*”, was in the third rank with an average of (3.6338). When it comes to the item: “*my teaching experiences were developed by observing cooperative teacher who used modern tools and new teaching aids in teaching process*”, the average was (3.0704). The lowest average (2.000) was for “*the practicum included theoretical and practical experiences*”.

These results indicate that the student-teacher has benefited from the practicum practices in the development of the following teaching skills: the interaction and communication with students and classroom management. This result agrees with Farrell (2008) regarding the core role of cooperative teachers that affects the student-teachers’ practicum experience. This result could be related to practicum assignments that ask student teachers to watch closely how cooperative teacher was communicating with his/her students. Such observation may enable student-teacher to imitate the cooperating teacher communication practices. Further, this result could be related to the fact that the practicum assignments ask cooperative teachers to engage with student-teachers in conversations regarding the implemented practices, and to give student-teachers the opportunity to present ideas and exchange views on issues of education and classroom practices. However, some student-teacher felt that the cooperative teachers did not use teaching resources, materials and aids effectively. This result agreed with (Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013) study that pointed out issues related to cooperative teachers practices. In addition, the participants felt that that the cooperative teachers focus on the theoretical knowledge during the practicum. This result could be related to cooperative teachers’ belief that there is no sufficient time to design or employ teaching materials properly. This result agreed with previous literature that indicates the lack of implementing teaching and learning materials in Jordanian pre-school stage (Al-Saudi & Al-Mane’, 2010). In addition, many of them found that the traditional teaching methods that depend on the chalk and talk are the favored applied teaching process, especially with the absence of the role of academic supervisor, and considering that the school principal is the resident supervisor for all teachers regardless of their specialties. This fact discourages the cooperative teachers and hinders their ability of employing teaching materials and resources appropriately.

*The second research question is:* What are the challenges faced by student-teachers during practicum experience? To answer this question averages and standard deviations of the difficulties were calculated. Table (2) presents the details.

Table (2): Averages and standard deviations of the challenges faced by student-teachers during practicum experience

Items' No.	Mean	Std. Deviation
9	3.7	0.46157
26	3.6197	0.59441
39	3.4789	0.58209
14	3.2676	0.60846
21	3.2676	0.73597
33	3.2394	0.76466
20	3.1268	0.71573
38	2.9014	0.88083
36	2.8873	0.8872
23	2.8592	0.72301
12	2.0141	0.94858
24	1.8451	0.78645
30	1.831	0.82784
22	1.7183	0.9737
<b>Challenged</b>	<b>3.018254</b>	<b>0.315904</b>

The results in Table (2) indicated that the total average of the challenges that faced the student-teachers was (3.018254). The table showed that there were several challenges faced by student-teachers during their practicum experience. The highest average was (3.7) and it was for paragraph (9): "*there was no impact of my character on dealing with others in the field*". This result is consistent with Jusoh (2011) study that discussed student-teachers' personal issues that hinder their progress in practicum practices.

Another challenge was the lack of guidance provided by practicum supervisor with an average of (3.6197). The related paragraph (26): "*the practicum supervisor explained tasks required for practicum properly*". The third obstacle with an average of (3.4789) was about the assessment challenge. Its related paragraph (39) was "*Practicum improved my assessment of student learning skills*". One of the clear problems that was highlighted by student-teachers was the understanding and handling of teaching assignments during their practicum. One of the reasons could be the absence of cooperative teacher's orientation and guidance role. The related paragraph (24) with an average of (1.8451) stated: "*The required tasks that I need to accomplish during the practicum were quite clear*". Further, communication with cooperative teachers was another distinguished challenge. The average of paragraph number (30) that highlighted this issue was (1.8310) and it stated "*It was easy to communicate with the cooperative teacher when I need explanation related*

*to the practicum*". This reveals that some student-teachers were not provided with adequate support by cooperative teacher. One reason for this could be the absence of clear procedures that cooperative teacher or academic supervisors should follow to keep student-teachers on track during their practicum. Also, this result could be attributed to the overload of work that the academic supervisors of student-teachers have. The other responsibilities may prevent them from completing the practicum follow-up process.

Subjectivity of cooperative teachers was one of the worries that student-teachers highlighted in the questionnaire. The related paragraph has an average of (1.7183) "*my final assessment that I got from cooperative teacher relied mostly on my personal relationship with him/her and not on my real performance*". This indicates that student-teachers were worried that their cooperative teachers may not be objective in their judgment of student-teacher performance. They were worried that cooperative teachers' personal beliefs and relationship with student-teachers may affect their final assessment.

*The research third question is:* Are there statistical differences of student-teachers' perspectives of the practicum practices related to the student-teacher's specialization, university Cumulative Average (CA), and their Average in General Secondary School Certificate Exam (AGSSC)? To answer the question, averages and standard deviations were calculated. In addition, the results of Three Way ANOVA for the impact of specialization, AGSSC and university CA were extracted. Furthermore, Three Way ANOVA was calculated to examine the significance of differences between the averages.



Table (3): Averages and standard deviations of student-teachers' perspectives of practicum experience due to their specialization, AGSSCE, and university CA

special	AGSSCE	CA	Mean	Std.Deviation	N
1	2	2	95.6154	6.97063	13
		_ 3	91.2000	7.84290	10
		Total	93.6957	7.52834	23
	3	2	92.7500	16.45955	4
		_ 3	92.9231	6.07538	13
		Total	92.8824	8.85919	17
	Total	2	94.9412	9.42384	17
		_ 3	92.1739	6.78670	23
		Total	93.3500	8.02097	40
2	2	2	87.8462	11.22383	13
		_ 3	80.2000	10.18332	5
		Total	85.7222	11.21347	18
	3	2	83.6667	6.65332	6
		_ 3	89.5714	8.79123	7
		Total	86.8462	8.15318	13
	Total	2	86.5263	10.01315	19
		_ 3	85.6667	10.15635	12
		Total	86.1935	9.90764	31
Total	2	2	91.7308	9.97420	26
		_ 3	87.5333	9.89853	15
		Total	90.1951	10.03299	41
	3	2	87.3000	11.70043	10
		_ 3	91.7500	7.09985	20
		Total	90.2667	8.94787	30
	Total	2	90.5000	10.50306	36
		_ 3	89.9429	8.54381	35
		Total	90.2254	9.52320	71

Table (4) The results of Three Way ANOVA for the differences between the averages of student-teachers' perspectives of practicum practices

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects							
Dependent Variable: practices							
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared	
Corrected Model	966.675 <sup>a</sup>	3	322.225	4.012	.011	.152	
Intercept	549669.333	1	549669.333	6843.137	.000	.990	
Specialization	960.080	1	960.080	11.953	.001	.151	Sig.
AGSSCE	7.202	1	7.202	.090	.766	.001	Not sig.
CA	72.203	1	72.203	.899	.346	.013	Not sig.
Error	5381.719	67	80.324				
Total	584332.000	71					
Corrected Total	6348.394	70					

a. R Squared = .152 (Adjusted R Squared = .114)

Table (4) indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the averages of student-teachers' perspectives of practicum practices due to the specialization variable. Specifically, the value of F was statistically significant and the differences were in favor of participants of classroom teacher because the averages of their responses were the highest (93.35 vs. 86.19). Also, the table shows that there were not statistically significant differences in the student-teachers' perspectives of practicum experiences due to the variables of GSSCE or university CA. The value of F was not statistically significant in both. These results indicate that student-teachers' high schools average and their university academic achievement did not have any effect on students' perspectives of practicum experiences. This result could be due to the practical context of practicum that was not influenced by the students' grades or their academic achievement. This experience allows student-teachers to face reality of teaching, and they discover their practical skills, especially for student-teachers specialized as classroom teachers. It is noticed from the results that student-teachers from classroom teacher specialization presented their perspectives more clearly than participants from early childhood education specialization. One reason could be related to the academic stage and its academic requirements. Because, when it comes to the first three grades, then teaching methods and classroom management are the core skills that student-teachers should focus on. This result supports the results of Conway (2002) that highlight the importance of the practicum in developing classroom management, and teaching methods for elementary grades.

Table (5): Averages and standard deviations of the challenges faced by student-teachers in practicum

specialty	AGSSCE	CA	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1.00	2.00	2.00	45.5385	4.21536	13
		3.00	43.0000	3.55903	10
		Total	44.4348	4.06567	23
	3.00	2.00	44.7500	9.53502	4
		3.00	41.3077	3.27579	13
		Total	42.1176	5.23071	17
Total	2.00	45.3529	5.52201	17	
	3.00	42.0435	3.43085	23	
	Total	43.4500	4.67920	40	
2.00	2.00	2.00	42.0000	4.24264	13
		3.00	39.4000	2.79285	5
		Total	41.2778	3.99714	18
	3.00	2.00	42.8333	5.67157	6
		3.00	43.5714	3.15474	7
		Total	43.2308	4.30414	13
Total	2.00	42.2632	4.59277	19	
	3.00	41.8333	3.58870	12	
	Total	42.0968	4.17417	31	
Total	2.00	2.00	43.7692	4.51936	26
		3.00	41.8000	3.66840	15
		Total	43.0488	4.28924	41
	3.00	2.00	43.6000	7.01110	10
		3.00	42.1000	3.33877	20
		Total	42.6000	4.80373	30
Total	2.00	43.7222	5.21871	36	
	3.00	41.9714	3.43413	35	
	Total	42.8592	4.48584	71	

Table (6): Results of analysis of three way ANOVA of the differences between the averages of student-teachers' challenges due to their specialization, AGSSCE, and university CA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Corrected Model	106.117 <sup>a</sup>	3	35.372	1.820	.152	
Intercept	124601.232	1	124601.232	6409.557	.000	
specialty	51.604	1	51.604	2.655	.108	Not sig.
AGSSCE	.518	1	.518	.027	.871	Not sig.
CA	70.525	1	70.525	3.628	.061	Not sig.
Error	1302.474	67	19.440			
Total	131829.000	71				
Corrected Total	1408.592	70				

a. R Squared = .075 (Adjusted R Squared = .034)

*The fourth question:* Are there statistical differences of student-teachers' challenges related to the student-teacher's specialization, university CA, and their AGSSCE? To answer this question, averages and standard deviations were calculated. In addition, the results of analysis of three way ANOVA of specialization, university CA, and AGSSCE were extracted. Further, three way ANOVA was extracted to examine the significance of differences between the averages.

Table (6) showed that there are no statistically significant differences in the averages of the students-teachers' challenges that are attributed to any of the variables of specialization, student-teachers' AGSSCE, and CA. That is, student-teachers' perspectives of practicum challenges did not affect by their specialization, their AGSSCE, and university CA. This result indicates that student-teachers from different specializations have common challenges during their practicum. The reason could be related to the practicum assignments that focus on the new context where student-teachers face new teaching environment, so their mentioned challenges are related to the new environment and context of implementing the school curriculum. With the same line of thought, Ngidi and Sibaya pointed out that the practicum is the first opportunity that student-teachers have to experience the real teaching practices (Ngidi & Sibaya, 2003). As a result, the presented challenges focus on current situation. So, student-teachers' AGSSCE, and university CA did not affect their shared challenges in the field. Also, student-teachers from either classroom teacher or early childhood education are working with children from early childhood stage, so challenges were common and the specialization did not affect the student's perspectives.

## **Conclusion and Future Recommendation**

Due to the crucial importance of practicum experience in developing the educational competencies of student-teachers, this study attempted to highlight student-teachers' perspectives of practicum practices and challenges. The main findings showed that the participants have benefited from the practicum practices in the development of the following teaching skills: the interaction and communication with students and classroom management skills. The student-teachers felt more comfortable in communicating with children by the end of the practicum experience and hoped to stay for a longer period in the field. This result is crucial because it supports previous research results (Al Naji, 2000; Hammad, 2005; & McNamara,1992) and it present a proof for stakeholders in the institutions of higher education to focus on increasing the duration of this practical experience since it has positive effect on student-teachers' confidence in the actual teaching field. In addition, the results indicate that student-teachers' GSSCE, and university cumulative average did not have any effect on students' perspectives of practicum experiences. This result can help university supervisors to plan thoroughly for this practical experience since it can upgrade prospective teachers' teaching skills regardless of their previous academic achievement. This result is promising because it highlights that practical experience is as crucial as theoretical experience. So, the study recommends adding a practical part into course description of the other courses in the study plan because this practical part may increase the students' achievement throughout their university study.

On the other hand, both classroom student-teachers and early childhood student-teachers highlight common challenges during their practicum experience. These challenges include: the lack of guidance provided by practicum supervisor, the difficulty in communicating with cooperative teachers, the inadequate support provided by cooperative teachers. So, the study suggests conducting mini-trainings or meetings for university supervisors, cooperative teachers, and student teachers to discuss and arrange the specific roles and expectations of each of them. In this way cooperative teachers and academic supervisors can follow clear procedures to keep student-teachers on track during their practicum. By implementing such suggestions the objectivity of assessment of student-teachers will increase and in turn affects this experience positively. Reviewing this study findings and challenges can help the educational stakeholders to minimize challenges' impact and to facilitate the training process to achieve the goals of practicum experience for prospective student-teachers in other higher education institutions that may have similar issues.

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