International Teaching Practicum: Challenges Faced by Pre-service EFL Teachers in ESL Settings

Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
kabilan@usm.my

Junjun Muhamad Ramdani
Universitas Siliwangi, Indonesia
junjunmuhamad@unsil.ac.id

Al-amin Mydin
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
alamin@usm.my

Rahmat Junaedi
Universitas Siliwangi, Indonesia
rahmat@unsil.ac.id

Abstract

Multiculturalism and diversity are integral elements in teacher education programmes in 21st century learning, especially in an era where globalization and internationalisation are regarded as important elements of development and growth. International teaching practicum (ITP) is seen as more and more relevant in promoting the above, as well as providing real challenges for pre-service teachers (PST). This qualitative study explores and examines the challenges faced by PSTs trained in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context while teaching in an English as a Second Language (ESL) context, and strategies they used in their attempts to surmount those challenges. The study also aims to understand how the challenges have made them understand the realities of teaching in an international context, especially in an ESL environment. Data obtained from the focused interviews and reflective journals indicate four emerging themes of the challenges faced by the pre-service EFL teachers in ESL settings: (1) curriculum, (2) planning of lessons, (3) language proficiency and, (4) cultural differences. The main implication stresses the need to integrate components and elements of multiculturalism into future ITP and teacher education programmes.

Keywords: international teaching practicum, English language teaching, ESL, EFL

Introduction

In this 21st century epoch of teaching and learning that emphasizes globalization, pre-service educators need to embrace and integrate multiculturalism and diversity into their programs (Ambe, 2006), since the nurturing of these two elements is an integral feature of globalization (Portera, 2010). Many teacher education institutions around the world (such as in Uganda (Bunoti, 2011); in US, Canada and Russia (Kirkwood-Tucker, 2009) and in Malaysia (Kabilan, 2013; Kabilan et al., 2017) are planning and implementing educational projects that take globalization into greater consideration so that a new generation of teachers 'are able to act as global citizens, understand the global system, and deliver a globally oriented education' (Zhao, 2010, p. 429). In the context of English language teaching and

globalization, this means that the fields of English as Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) should move forward and venture into internationalization initiatives and projects that will lead to multiculturalism and diversity (Baker 2003).

International teaching practicum (ITP) has been undertaken by many institutions to give their pre-service teachers (PST) international learning experiences in real contexts. ITP would offer the PSTs the opportunity to 'observe and work with real students, teachers and curriculum in natural settings' (Huling, 1998, p. 1) in an international context, whilst learning to teach and experiencing the demands of teaching in an international context. Through direct engagement in teaching, discussions and dialogues with supervising and mentor teachers, as well as observations of experienced teachers' practices, PSTs would be able to develop a 'contextualised understanding of the intricacies of teaching' in an international context (Spooner-Lane, Tangen & Campbell, 2009, p. 80). Numerous studies show the benefits of such initiatives – experiencing broadened global perspectives (Kabilan et al., 2017), and gaining more awareness, understanding and affirmation of diverse cultural notions and values (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Harbon, 2007). These benefits should enrich the professional development of PST, especially in responding and reacting to educational dynamics and challenges, and the 'eventualities of the future to deal with the challenges of the present' (Amobi, 2003, p. 25) and eventually lead them to becoming effective teachers in future.

Nevertheless, most of the studies on ITP involved PSTs, who were either native speakers of English or from an ESL background (Luk & Lin, 2019; Lee, 2009). There are also studies of English language PSTs originating from EFL contexts but trained and underwent their practicum in a native speaking environment (for example, Spooner-Lane, Tangen & Campbell, 2009). Studies of PSTs from the EFL contexts or trained in the EFL contexts undergoing their ITP in an ESL or native-speaker environment is scarce in literature. Since literature indicates that there are many challenges in many ITP projects that have been carried out around the world (see literature review section), there is strong interest in exploring and examining the challenges that PSTs trained in an EFL setting would face and experience during their ITP in an ESL setting. Such an investigation would yield detailed information on how the PSTs from an EFL context would recognize challenges and how to surmount them/ This would then provide valuable insights for teacher education providers in the EFL context on the aspects of training that should be emphasized, or revised, especially in the framework of current needs for internationalization and globalization of teacher education programmes.

This study reports the challenges faced by four PSTs, who were trained in the EFL context (i.e., Indonesia), during their ITP in an ESL context (i.e. Malaysia), and the strategies and attempts they make to surmount those challenges, or at least understand how the challenges have made them understand the realities of teaching in an international context, especially in an ESL environment. The term 'challenges' in this study is defined as obstacles, hindrances, problem, difficulties, dilemmas, predicaments, setbacks and drawbacks that PSTs face and experience during their ITP in their respective schools, particularly in terms of English language teaching.

Literature Review

In the new millennium, the emergence of the concepts of internationalization and globalization (see Larsen, 2016; Sherman, 2016), and the growing emphasis on teaching and learning in a multicultural environment (see Manning, Baruth, & Lee, 2017; Nieto, 2015) have further convinced many higher educational institutions around the world to provide opportunities for the PSTs to experience teaching and learning in an international context (Kabilan et al., 2017s). Such experiences would enable PSTs to 'experience cross-cultural

learning to gain a deeper understanding of the world in which they live and to enable them to teach with, work with, and continue to learn from people different from themselves' (Cushner & Mahon, 2002, p. 55). The fostering of these experiences would develop 'culturally confident, competent and sensitive world-minded teachers' (Walters, Garii & Walters, 2009, p. 156). These are plausible, as the PSTs' experiences in the 'foreign educational settings and schools' would facilitate their understanding of 'the different ideas and philosophies of diverse groups of individuals' (Kabilan, 2013, p. 198).

However, the same foreign contexts discussed above, may become a bane to the PSTs during their ITP. This was discovered by Zhou (2014), who found that a majority of Chinese PSTs faced culture shocks in American schools, as the students portrayed behaviours that the PSTs regarded as inappropriate and indicated lack of discipline. Similarly, Ateskan (2016), despite the benefits of ITP, highlights schooling environment and culture in United States of America that 'are not very common to come across in Turkey', especially in terms of security and safety (p. 143). Hence, PSTs' ability to adapt to the local culture and the new surrounding environment is seen as an overarching issue that may determine the success of the ITP (Kabilan et al., 2017). This is because, 'cross-cultural experience' similar to the ITP involves some 'risks' and can 'unsettle and transform' the PSTs, as they learn about themselves in the process of learning about others (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 30).

The above premise is reified in the study by Cantalini-Williams and Tessaro (2011), who narrated how English language PSTs faced difficulties in overcoming the language barrier and 'felt 'uncomfortable learning a new language while simultaneously trying to understand important terms in order to communicate' with learners in the local environment. This particular situation, though challenging and demanding, transformed into an effective learning tool for the PSTs to comprehend 'the feelings of English language learners in their future classrooms' and how they could utilise such situations to embrace and put into practice new teaching techniques (p. 52). Kabilan et al., 2017 too found that the different environments, contexts and cultural tenets presented the PSTs with valuable learning experiences of a *new* 'school climate, syllabus and content, and teaching pedagogy' during their ITP. PSTs' experiences with the different educational systems allow them to discover and be aware of the 'advantages and disadvantages of both systems and how the distinct systems can be influential for the respective educational settings' (Kabilan, 2013, p. 206).

Literature has also reported other challenges such as insufficient amount of time during ITP, and thus denying meaningful learning and teaching experiences for the PSTs (Kabilan, 2013). Also, there are instances of pre-determined goals of ITP not being attained (Talburt, 2009) due to PSTs' lack of preparation and readiness (Mahan & Stachowski, 1990) or even lack of proper, realistic, and fluid organisation and implementation of ITP at all levels (Sahin, 2008). An even more formidable challenge, and a very relevant one in the form of a question was raised by Otten (2000) – "Do domestic students benefit from internationalisation? (p. 16). This question remains unanswered. From the perspectives of the above challenges, our primary concern is to examine EFL trained teachers' experiences of teaching English in an ESL setting. This a strand of research on ITP that has not explored thoroughly, which would yield researchers good fundamental insights of future training of EFL teachers in readying the PSTs for an English language teaching career in an international, globalised, and multicultural educational settings.

Findings from this study could be very significant, especially when the PSTs from Indonesia, where English is considered and treated as a foreign language, undertaking their ITP in a foreign environment where English is used as a second language, and where the challenges, perhaps, would be different from the challenges examined in previous literature. This would pave the way for other future research that examines similar circumstances and provide further insights of these phenomena.

Method

This research was a phenomenological case study that concerned with the making sense of individual experiences i.e. how the four PSTs perceived their teaching experience during ITP as a distinguishable experience from other kinds of teaching experiences because in phenomenological studies, the specific phenomena must be discriminated (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This would mean that the PSTs should specifically address their experiences during ITP and not their experiences during other forms of teaching. Through this dynamic process, the EFL PSTs were required to determine the challenges faced and articulate how they understood the challenges in terms of teaching English in an ESL context during ITP.

Research Setting

The ITP programme, aimed at providing opportunities for the PSTs trained in the EFL setting to gain teaching experiences in an ESL context, was a collaboration project between Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and two Indonesians universities i.e. Universitas Siliwangi (UNSIL) and IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro (IPB). It was undertaken in two secondary schools in Malaysia. In this study, they will be identified as 'School A' and 'School B'. These two schools are government secondary schools and the teachers and learners in both schools are from a multiracial background that consists of Malays, Chinese and Indians. The average age of the learners (from both schools) is 13 years and they were studying in Form 1 (equivalent to junior high school students). Each school hosted two Indonesian English language PSTs for four weeks who started in the second week of April and ended in mid May 2018. The PSTs were required to teach English for two classes with a total of 120 minutes of lessons per week. In addition to teaching responsibilities, the PSTs were actively involved in co-curricular activities and carried out related administrative duties.

Each PSTs was assigned a mentor teacher (an English language teacher) from the respective schools. The mentor teachers observed PSTs' teaching at least three times during the 4 weeks of ITP. The PSTs usually discussed and consulted the mentors before they designed the lesson plans and developed teaching and learning materials for a specific lesson. Each PST was also assigned an academic supervisor from USM. They observed each PST at least once during their ITP and, gave feedback and suggestions for the PSTs to further improve their teaching.

Participants

Since there were limited places available, a selection process with the following criteria was put into place. First, the PSTs must have completed 120 credits of their undergraduate English Language Education Program. Then, the PSTs were short-listed based on their Grade Point Average (GPA) of courses related to pedagogy, whereby only students who obtained a minimum of 'A−' was determined. They then had to undergo an interview session to determine their English language proficiency, personality, emotional intelligence, and language teaching commitment. Finally, the selected four PSTs were incubated in microteaching sessions in order to enhance their readiness and preparation for ITP.

All the selected four PSTs were females, with an average age of 21 and, are in their final year of their academic programmes. Upon completion of their ITP in Malaysia, they would be able to graduate with a Bachelor of Education (EFL) degree and with which, they would be able to seek employment in the Indonesian education school system as an English

language teacher. Two PSTs from UNSIL (identified as S1 and S2) were posted to School A while the other two from IPB (identified as S3 and S4) were posted to School B.

Data Collection Method and Analysis

Two instruments were used to collect data for this study i.e. open-ended interviews (or unstructured interview) and reflective journal. The unstructured interview was used because the researcher has a lucid research plan in terms of the focus and goal of the interview (Chirban, 1996) i.e. PSTs' experiences, specifically challenges faced while undergoing ITP in the Malaysian schools. The open-ended interviews were done twice – the first one was during ITP i.e. in the third week and the other after the ITP ended. Data collected from the open-ended interview were identified by 'IS1' that would refer to the excerpts obtained from interviewing S1, who is the one of the PST posted to School A. Similar codes were used for the other PSTs.

The PSTs were also asked to maintain a reflective journal, again focusing on the challenges faced, as well as other issues that beleaguered them or issues and things that they felt important to their ITP and their learning and teaching journey during the four weeks in the Malaysian schools. The PSTs were also encouraged to write and reflect on any critical events or incidents. The idea of 'critical events' or 'incidents' is suggested by Richard and Lockhard (1984) and adopted for this study that would assist PSTs in capturing their challenges, experiences and learning during their ITP. The PSTs were required to make at least 3 entries per week in their reflective journal. Data collected from reflective journal were identified by 'RS1' that would mean reflection made by S1, who is the one of the PST posted to School A. Similar codes were used for the other PSTs.

The collected data from the two instruments were identified, analysed and reported thematically, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). These started from data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for the themes among the collated and coded data, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and constructing final report. The analysis of data from different sources (i.e. open-ended interview and reflective journal) establishes the accuracy of findings (Stake, 1995) and facilitates transferability of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Using these methods, four main themes and patterns emerge as the leading challenges faced by the PSTs in the ESL setting.

Findings and Discussions

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews and reflective journals indicate four emerging themes of the challenges faced by the pre-service EFL teachers in ESL settings. The four themes are curriculum, planning of lessons, language proficiency and cultural differences.

Curriculum – Syllabus, Teaching and Learning, and Materials

This is the main challenge that the PSTs faced in the ESL context i.e. the curriculum is alien to them, especially the syllabus, how teaching and learning is conducted in the ESL contexts and the materials development and use for the ESL context. RS3 points out that in Indonesia, English is a foreign language whereas in Malaysia English is considered and used as a second language, and hence, in terms of English language teaching, the approach is different – it is very much student-centred. Therefore, in the Malaysian ESL context, she has to 'try to make the students active', whereas in Indonesia, it is normal for a teaching-focused classroom i.e. a teacher-centred classroom. This is also shared by S1 in the interview as she searched for

> … an approach to engage to them (the ESL learners) and that's something kinda new to me.. I don't really get to do that back in my country. Because my students in my country sits in regular kinda seats.. actually I asked my mentor about this.. why do they have to sits in group… and she said this is the 21st century learning… that's the way it is in Malaysia (IS1).

When the teaching and learning orientation and perspectives are different, the PSTs faced a demanding challenge in terms of creating and developing appropriate and suitable materials, and using them meaningfully and effectively. This has been a crucial concern for all PSTs. For example RS1, developed and used an inappropriate material that 'made a huge impact today. The negative kind of effect… again'. The text developed and used was way too easy for the learners, and she realized that it should reflect the actual proficiency level of the ESL learners. As for RS2, after a couple of weeks of teaching in the ESL context, she 'couldn't use the teaching materials well' and was 'still confused how to teach grammar' to her class.

In order to address the challenges of teaching in an ESL context, the PSTs resorted to adopting, emulating and adhering to acceptable practices of teaching and learning in an ESL context that are suggested or prescribed by their mentor teachers:

> After seeing my mentor taught the class yesterday, I might use the method she usually conducted in the class cause the method seems to be effective, I tried to use the same way of teaching today and I feel the difference, so I might use the same method for my next lesson but I do need lots of practice (RS1).

> I saw mentor use full English when she was teaching the class last week and so I think I have to do that too (RS1).

> My mentor teacher made an impact on my teaching today. As I said that my mentor always gave me the feedback after I finished teaching. I did what my mentor teacher said to me. Today I didn't forget about the closing of my lesson. But she said to me that I still need gave them some questions which will make them think more (RS2).

In terms of the curriculum challenges faced by the PSTs, it is evident that they are learning to 'evaluate, select and organize important subject matter concepts and materials' so that they can convey these to their learners 'in ways that provoke deep learning' (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 207-208). These also indicate that the PSTs are demonstrating and developing some form of 'curricular thinking' i.e. thinking 'in terms of the big picture and connect students' needs and interests to disciplinary concepts, and the development of critical skills' (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 211). Such attempt of curriculum appropriation (Yuan, 2017) has been a real challenge for the PSTs during their ITP, as they struggled with issues related to pedagogy, status of English, proficiency levels of learners and, materials development and use.

Planning of Lessons
The PSTs experienced difficulties when it came to planning of lessons and writing an appropriate lessons plan. This is mainly because the lesson plan format that is practiced in Indonesia and the one used in Malaysian schools are different (RS2), and not the 'same one that I used to do' (RS1) because it is 'very detailed compared to Indonesia' (RS4). The challenge for the pre-service teachers are when they are given the freedom to do their 'own lesson plan' that gives them the opportunity 'to explore' and they attempt to create different lesson plans from the existing lesson plans given by the mentor teachers (RS1). There are instances where the guidance from the mentor teachers actually made them alter their lesson plans:

> yeah, umm for the final lesson plan, I didn't actually plan my students to do a poster, but then my mentor say it's better if you told them to do something, like… this class loves drawing.. What do you think.. And I was like.. Okay.. Probably making a mini poster would do. Because this class, 2E class is a very active students, if we make it as a teacher center, then it'll be a waste, they have to do something in order to make them like… at least engage and do the task... sit down and do the work (IS1).

At other times, lesson plans had to be changed due to unavailability of appropriate facilities. For example, RS4 had to change her 'lesson plan and do another activity without LCD projector' and do another lesson plan 'with the same objective and theme but different activity'. Nevertheless, according to the PSTs, they face a daunting task of creating, planning, developing and implementing a lesson that will engage learners in active learning. According to RS2, this is 'so that the class is not boring' and also, the learners will experience fun learning. This is a big issue for the pre-service EFL teachers because they realize a huge gap between their language proficiency and of their ESL learners, and this seriously affect the teaching and learning process. Hence, they have to develop lesson plans with materials that engage the learners meaningfully. This matter is captured by IS3:

> Maybe because they're so really smart, so I have to increase my knowledge also I have to… as I said before that I afraid this material is too easy for them and then I have to think what is it, more difficult material for them so it was really challenging for me.

In addition, IS3 stressed that the mixed-ability learners in the classrooms means that she finds it 'difficult to plan lessons and it is a real challenge' for her, especially when she believes that the English language proficiency of the Indian students are high as compared to the Malay and Chinese students (RS3).

Similar findings are found in a number of studies. For example, planning an engaging lesson is difficult, and is usually one of the main concerns of PSTs during practicum (see Gan, 2013), beginning teachers (see Goodwin, 2012), and even inexperienced teachers and trainers (see Richards, 2017). It is difficult, as described by the PSTs in this study, because of the interplay of the different challenges above that had to be taken into consideration in planning an engaging lesson plan (Gan, 2013; Richards, 2017). In addition, the PSTs need to 'translate syllabus guidelines, instructional expectations, and their own beliefs and ideologies of education into guides for action in the classroom' so that 'the structure and purpose for what teachers and pupils do in the classroom' is clear and meaningful (Calderhead, 1984, p. 69). This is even more difficult when the PSTs are in a context where English is learnt and taught differently. Nevertheless, data derived from their reflections indicate that the PSTs are aware of the situation, and also of the need to improve by constantly learning from the challenges faced, as well as from their mentor teachers.

Language Proficiency

All four PSTs have raised their concerns over issues related to language proficiency and are aware of the language proficiency differences between themselves as EFL pre-service teachers and the ESL learners in Malaysia. IS4 pointed out that 'Penang is ESL and in Bojonegoro is not'. In Indonesia, she teaches by using two languages i.e English and Indonesian, as the learners have 'not mastered English yet' (RS4). In the ESL context, their daily teaching during ITP reflect this scenario as they grapple with the ESL learners' accent (RS2) and trying to understand them (IS3, RS2) especially in classes where the ESL learners

prefer to use the Malay language rather than English during English lessons. RS2 notes that these weak learners have poor command of English and this was a huge hindrance in understanding the ESL learners, and thus leading to poor classroom management. Nevertheless, over the 4 weeks period, the PSTs are able to cope up with their learners gradually (IS1, RS2) and get better in terms of comprehending their learners' language and understanding them (RS1, RS2, RS3, IS1).

The improvement is because of the PSTs' insistence that the students use English fully in the classrooms, even though some are very reluctant and 'give excuses' for not using English (RS1). Guidance and advice from the mentor teachers on the use of English also played an important role in ensuring the PSTs 'use English no matter what' (RS1). The following RS2's weekly reflection encapsulates the above situation:

> The more I teach here, the more I could get experiences and knowledge. I never stop be grateful for this chance. At least I know the different of ESL classroom and EFL classroom. For ESL classroom English is a must whether they like it or not. It made me want to learn more and explore more for the students in ESL Classroom. Besides the class that I taught are the high English proficiency level.

IS3 and RS2 depicted that the different setting of teaching practicum required the PSTs to adjust their English. Different cultural background and native language affected their English accent. Moreover, their students are from different background in terms of English language proficiency and are not accustomed to the English produced by the PSTs.

The PSTs realize that their learners are multilingual. They experienced their ITP in the Malaysian ESL context, which is diverse, different and challenging. This has presented the PSTs the opportunity to experience, learn, practice and communicate using English in a multilingual setting. Teaching and learning in such multilingualism context is challenging for the four PSTs, where they have to adjust and cope with that challenge. RS2's reflection is an indication that adjusting and coping with challenges in a multilingual classroom could also be a resource for learning and improvement because it offers the 'possibility for teachers and learners to access academic content through the linguistic resources they bring to the classroom while simultaneously acquiring new ones' (Honberger & Vaish, 2009, p. 316). In addition, with the support and guidance given by the mentors, the PSTs are able to acclimatise to the local students speaking and communicating using the English language on a daily basis, and thus allowing the PSTs to plan and facilitate better teaching and learning English in the classrooms. The data from this study seem to acknowledge that language proficiency is the knowledge and competence of an individual in using the language, 'irrespective of how, where, or under what conditions it has been acquired' (Bachman, 1990, p. 16).

Cultural differences

Grasping cultural differences is a huge challenge for the PSTs. They clearly state how the cultural differences in Malaysia have affected them, especially in terms of teaching and learning. In Indonesia, there is only one race i.e. *'Bangsa Indonesia'* but in Malaysia, as perceived by the PSTs, there are different races. When RS1 came to the class to teach, she finds 'students from different culture (as) there are Indians, Malay, and also Chinese', which is 'something new' to RS1, as well as a 'very exciting' opportunity because she never had the chance to experience different cultures in Indonesian classrooms. She realized that she has to have different approaches to teach the learners of 'different culture, race and characteristics' (RS1). Likewise, according to RS4,

> … in Indonesia I teach just one kind of students, they are Indonesian originally. But here, there were two kinds of students, they were Malaysian and Indian. They have their own slang. I should learn and understand about that (RS4).

RS2 too have similar perspective,

> Actually in 1G, all the students were Malaysian and Moslem. In 2B, the students were various like Chinese, Malaysian, and Indian. I think the different culture and background could influence the effectiveness of the teaching learning process (RS2).

Nevertheless, facing the learners of different cultures is not as easy as it may seem, as discovered by these PSTs, especially in the ESL contexts. Since the Indian and Chinese students speak and converse using slightly a different accent of the English language, RS4 have difficulties in understanding and comprehending what they say, and to a great extent hinders communication, and eventually halts a smooth and effective teaching and learning process. IS1 explains her situation in the classroom in dealing with Indian and Chinese students,

> they never actually spoke to me.. the whole time I was there they never spoke to me.. so everytime I came to the class and explain them thing and make them do something, I would ermmm… sit with them first.. ill ask them if they understand the instruction.. if they say no, then I will try to speak in slower rate.. because they have been complaining.. all of them says that I speak too fast and my accent is different from them so they say its really hard to understand... (IS1)

IS2 teaches in an intermediate classroom, where the learners have quite a high level of English language proficiency and only speak English during English lessons. She describes her struggles in this classroom:

> … there are so many races like Chinese, Malaysian and also Indian. Of course they have some accents, they have their own accent…I have to struggle with that especially Chinese student. The accent was really not understandable hehe it's not understandable for me because they spoke so fast sometimes they put their own language in the sentence. So yaa it made me have to struggle more and then sometimes I just tell to my students can you speak slowly? Cause I have to understand you…

A classic example of miscommunication due to different linguistic meaning is described by RS3 when she used the Indonesian language to convey her instruction to her learners:

> I said 'alright sekarang tolong kerjakan tugas kalian…' kerjakan has a different meaning right (in the Malay language)? I just knew that. They were just laughing and then I'm just feeling like oh my God they're bullying me (RS3).

The above cultural elements observed and experienced by the PSTs in the ESL and EFL classrooms are clearly distinct and, they struggle to cope up with the differences, as well as understanding and adapting to a culture different from their own that have evidently created 'communication breakdowns' (Wong, Indiatsi, & Wong, 2016, p. 60). These breakdowns, to a great extent, negatively affect how the PSTs teach and facilitate learning of English as they experience difficulties in meeting the 'academic needs' of their students and fail to 'address issues due to diversity of languages' (Wong, Indiatsi, & Wong, 2016, p. 60).

Conclusion

The PSTs in this study endured four main challenges during their ITP in Malaysia – curriculum, planning of lessons, language proficiency and cultural differences. These challenges encourage and lead to the PSTs' professional development while maintaining their identity as a future English language teacher. In other words, ITP in the Malaysian ESL context presented the EFL PSTs with the opportunity to challenge themselves in a foreign environment that afforded meaningful and enriching learning situations, albeit difficult and complicated ones that they have never experienced before. Eventually, the ITP developed into a platform for the PSTs to learn and fully understand what they lacked and the knowledge and skills they needed to improve as an English language teacher.

PSTs realize that although English is a global language, the teaching of it, however, is contextual in nature and hinges on how the curriculum is designed, interpreted and implemented in a particular setting. Also significant to the PSTs are the factors related to cultural differences and language proficiencies, which they struggled with as, they have had no real or relevant experiences prior to ITP that would have enlightened them on how to cope with those multicultural issues, for example. By focusing on the challenges, the PSTs were able to gain insights and greater understanding of their professional development, in particular being critical and thinking about many aspects of the curriculum and how they can bring the elements of the curriculum closer to their learners based on their existing and current knowledge.

Although we primarily examined the challenges faced and the way the PSTs surmounted those challenges, we never expected it would lead to professional development, as indicated by some of the findings. We were more interested in understanding how the PSTs would address the challenges and not on the impacts of the challenges. Though the evidences available are not prevalent and obvious for all the challenges, the ones discernible are strong and do indicate how the PSTs learn from their experiences. Eventually, this leads to the realization of meaningful understanding of the situation due to the powerful learning experienced by PSTs through self-reflection, examination and observation using a multifaceted array of interconnected learning opportunities. This contributes to the enrichment of their professional development as future English language teachers. Previous studies examined PSTs' experiences during ITP that led to professional development (see Kabilan et al., 2017; Kabilan, 2013) but in this study, PSTs examining their own challenges have led to specific professional development that are underlined by the respective challenges. It seems that by critically examining and analysing challenges, PSTs could learn and improve themselves as a future teacher.

In the era of internationalisation and globalisation, the main implication of this study is the urgent need to introduce and integrate subjects or topics on multiculturalism into English language teacher education, especially for institutions and stakeholders who promote, sponsor and provide ITP or any other forms of international field experiences. This is because, as Xerri (2016) explicates, teachers who are not trained and prepared for teaching in a multicultural context may not be able to develop their students' language proficiency satisfactorily as they would lack the necessary competency, knowledge and pedagogical skills. The other implication is that teaching practicum experiences should engage PSTs in challenging learning situations, which are different to their own environment, that would facilate PSTs to confront their existing educational beliefs and norms, as well as to ignite meaningful and relevant professional development experiences that would reify their self-realization and awareness towards becoming better English language teachers. Hence, teacher

educators and trainers, providers and, institutions should infuse creative ideas/tasks that would facilitate such experiences, and not simply and solely promoting learning about teaching through practicum.

Nevertheless, more similar studies that are situated in different ESL contexts involving EFL PSTs from different contexts should be able to inform us of different challenges, as well as depict a deeper understanding of those challenges faced by the PSTs during ITP. This would grant teacher education providers valuable information and ideas on enriching PSTs' experiences during ITP or teaching practicum, and ultimately, enhancing quality of teacher education. The focus on a different multicultural setting than this study would offer even profound understanding of the intricacies of the influence of different elements of multiculturalism on teaching and learning of English, especially by a PST trained in an EFL context.

About the Authors

Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan: a professor of TESOL at the School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia.

Junjun Mohd Ramdani: a lecturer at the Faculty of Teacher Education and Education, Universitas Siliwangi, Tasik Malaysia, Indonesia.

Al-amin Mydin: a lecturer at the School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Rahmat Junaedi: a lecturer at the Faculty of Teacher Education and Education, Universitas Siliwangi, Tasik Malaysia, Indonesia.

References

Ambe, E. B. (2006). Fostering multicultural appreciation in pre-service teachers through multicultural curricular transformation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *22*(6), 690-699.

Amobi, F. (2003). Reflections on the transformation in a teacher educator's teaching of educational philosophy. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *30*(3), 23-32.

Ateşkan, A. (2016). Pre-service teachers' cultural and teaching experiences abroad. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *42(2)*, 135-148.

Bachman, L. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baker, W. (2003). Should culture be an overt component of EFL instruction outside of English speaking countries? The Thai context. *Asian EFL Journal*, *5*(4), 1-25.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Butler, Y. G. (2015). English language education among young learners in East Asia: A review of current research (2004–2014). *Language Teaching, 48*(3), 303-342.

Calderhead, J. (1984). *Teachers' classroom decision-making*. London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston

Cantalini-Williams, M., & Tessaro, M. L. (2011). Teacher candidates' perceptions of an international practicum experience in Italian schools: Benefits of a short-term placement with faculty support. *Comparative and International Education/Éducation Comparée et Internationale, 40*(*3*), 45-60.

Chirban, JT. (1996). *Interviewing in depth: The interactive relational approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

Clement, M., & Vandenberghe, R. (2000). Teachers' professional development: A solitary or collegial (ad)venture? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *16*, 81-101.

Cushner, K., & Mahon, J. (2002). Overseas student teaching: Affecting personal, professional, and global competencies in an age of globalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *6*, 44-58.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). *Powerful teacher education*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Desimone, L. M. (2011). A primer on effective professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *92*(6), 68-71.

Florio-Ruane, S. (2001). *Teacher education and the cultural imagination: Autobiography, conversation and narrative.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fuller, M. L. (1994). The monocultural graduate in the multicultural environment: A challenge for teacher educators. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *45*(4), 269-277.

Galloway, N. (2013). Global Englishes and English Language Teaching (ELT)–Bridging the gap between theory and practice in a Japanese context. *System, 41*(3), 786-803.

Gan, Z. (2013). Learning to teach English language in the practicum: What challenges do non-native ESL student teachers face? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *38*(3), 92-108

Goodwin, B. (2012). Research says new teachers face three common challenges. *Educational Leadership*, *69*(8), 84-85.

Harbon, L. (2007). Short-term international experiences and teacher language awareness. *International Education Jour*nal, *8*(1), 229-243.

Huling, L. (1998). *Early field experiences in teacher education*. ERIC Digest ED429054. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education.

Kabilan, M.K. (2013). A phenomenological study of an international teaching practicum: pre-service teachers' experiences of professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *36*, 198-209.

Kabilan, M.K., Hallijah H., Nooraishah Z., Anna, C.A. Hairul, N.I. & Mahbub, A. K. (2017). International teaching practicum in Bangladesh: An investigation of TESOL pre-service teachers' professional development experiences. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction (Special issue on Graduate Students Research on Education*, 117-140.

Larsen, A. (2016). Globalisation and internationalisation of teacher education: A comparative case study of Canada and Greater China. *Teaching Education*, *27*(4), 396-409.

Lee, J. (2009). ESL student teachers' perceptions of a short-term overseas immersion programme. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*, 1095-1104

Liu, Y. (2016). The emotional geographies of language teaching. *Teacher Development*, *20*(4), 482-497.

Luk, J. C., & Lin, A. M. (2017). *Classroom interactions as cross-cultural encounters: Native speakers in EFL lessons.* New York: Routledge.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research.* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Manning, M. L., Baruth, L. G., & Lee, G. L. (2017). *Multicultural education of children and adolescents.* New York: Taylor & Francis.

Navarro, S., Zervas, P., Gesa, R., & Sampson, D. (2016). Developing teachers' competences for designing inclusive learning experiences. *Educational Technology and Society*, *19*(1), 17-27.

Nieto, S. (2015). *The light in their eyes: Creating multicultural learning communities*. NY: Teachers College Press.

Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Psychological Journal*, *20*(1), 7-14.

Portera, A. (2010). Intercultural and multicultural education: Epistemological and semantic aspects. In C. Grant & A. Portera (Eds.), *Intercultural and multicultural education* (pp. 26-44). NY: Routledge.

Sherman, P. (2016). Preparing social workers for global gaze: Locating global citizenship within social work curricula. *Social Work Education*, *35*(6), 632-642.

Spooner-Lane, R., Tangen, D., & Campbell, M. (2009). The complexities of supporting Asian international pre-service teachers as they undertake practicum. *Asia−Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 37*(1), 79-94.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Walters, L. M., Garii, B., & Walters, T. (2009). Learning globally, teaching locally: incorporating international exchange and intercultural learning into pre-service teacher training. *Intercultural Education*, *20*(sup1), 151-158.

Wong, C., Indiatsi, J., & Wong, G. (2016). ESL teacher candidates' perceptions of strengths and inadequacies of instructing culturally and linguistically diverse students: Post clinical experience. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, *23*(2), 57-64.

Yuan, R. (2017). Appropriating national curriculum standards in classroom teaching: Experiences of novice language teachers in China. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *83*, 55-64.

Zhao, Y. (2010). Preparing globally competent teachers: A new imperative for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *61*(5), 422-431.

Zhou, W. Y. (2014). Chinese sojourn teachers' perceptions of and experiences with K-12 U.S. students: Implications for cross-cultural classroom management (pp. 288-302). In S. Ben Said and L. Zhang (Eds), *Language teachers and teaching: Global perspectives, local initiatives.* New York: Routledge.