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From Theory to Praxis: Humanizing Pedagogy in EFL Practicum

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Abstract

Efforts to incorporate academic content into practicum for pre-service teachers (PSTs) aim to enhance learning but face implementation challenges, reflecting global concerns about teacher preparedness and professional identity. This study examines the perceptions of 19 English PSTs in Israel enrolled in the "From Theory to Praxis" (FTTP) program, a newly tailored practicum model integrating academic institutions with school-based teaching. Using a narrative qualitative approach, the study explored personal and social dynamics shaping pedagogical development (Philipsen et al., 2019). Findings revealed that supervised, hands-on experience in real-world settings supported the development of pedagogical identity and humanistic teaching, emphasizing empathy, immediacy, engagement, and student well-being. Reflecting on their personal and professional growth, PSTs viewed FTTP as a transformative platform for teacher development. The study highlights the importance of collaboration between schools and training institutions and offers insights for bridging the theory-practice gap. It concludes with recommendations for refining global teacher education policy.

Keywords: *Theory-Praxis, Practicum, Professional Identity, Humanization, English Teachers, Immediacy.*

Introduction

Given the recent shift from conventional practicum models to more tailored and constructive approaches, there is a growing emphasis on bridging the longstanding gap between theory and praxis. This shift aligns with efforts to promote empirical, collaborative, flexible, and effective learning experiences in teacher education. Although the practicum is primarily situated within the field of education, the divide between theoretical instruction and practical application remains a persistent concern. Its central aim is to establish a partnership between schools and universities, serving as a bridge between classroom-based theory and real-world teaching practice (Allsopp et al., 2006; Blankshain et al., 2021). In essence, the practicum enables student teachers to take the pedagogical theories they have studied and implement them in actual classroom settings.

Nevertheless, some scholars argue that the relationship between theory and practice is tenuous or even nonexistent (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996; Goodnough et al., 2016). Others, maintain that such a relationship not only exists but is essential and potentially productive (Magni, 2019; Chittum, 2018). Anecdotal and empirical evidence alike suggest that many PSTs struggle to transfer theoretical knowledge into practice in ways that go beyond simplistic trial-and-error methods (Standal et al., 2014; Imsa-ard et al., 2021; Benati, 2021). These challenges highlight the complex nature of the theory-practice interface.

Despite global differences in education systems, the overarching goals of enhancing teacher

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education and improving teaching quality are largely universal. However, one significant issue persists: practicum programs were not originally designed based on empirical research. For example, a study by Ferraz et al. (2021) examined how PSTs applied their academic knowledge during practicum and found that these experiences encouraged the re-evaluation of prior learning and the development of context-specific strategies. Yet the lack of a structured and tailored support system left many PSTs to adopt sporadic and improvised approaches to problem-solving.

The expectation that practicum will transform student teachers often mirrors the very theory-practice dilemma it seeks to resolve. As Yinger (1980) notes, effective implementation of educational reforms requires both action and evaluation to determine whether objectives have been achieved. Supporting this, Bowling et al. (2018) assert that there is insufficient evidence to support the current requirements for clinical hours in practicum settings. Further, research by Cohen et al. (2013), which reviewed studies from 1996 to 2009, revealed recurring tensions and conflicts in relationships among mentors, supervisors, and PSTs, stemming from divergent interests, pedagogical approaches, and unresolved power imbalances. That is, the practicum experience often involves unpredictable and challenging conditions, which can impede the development of consistent professional competencies. These fluctuations are closely linked to the mentoring models employed (Rupp & Becker, 2021).

Another complication is the minimal interaction between PSTs and school staff during practicum placements. This disconnect reveals a broader asymmetry between host schools and university-based practicum programs. Nonetheless, there has been a growing recognition of the need to better integrate theoretical and practical components in teacher education. Recent studies in the field have centered on identifying core teaching competencies and designing practicum programs that more effectively support the synthesis of pedagogical theory and classroom practice (Cribbs et al., 2020; Soto et al., 2023).

PSTs continue to face numerous challenges worldwide, particularly in translating theoretical concepts from higher education courses into practical application. Becoming a professional practitioner or instructional leader requires agility in moving between theory and practice. This remains a daunting task given the limitations of many traditional practicum models.

For practicum to be meaningful, programs must include not only self-assessments by students but also peer assessments by mentors and trainers. The innovative program under discussion, or FTTP program encompasses all of these components, in addition to lecturer-based assessments, thereby offering a more comprehensive and multi-perspective approach to teacher preparation.

Assessment in Teaching Practice

Assessment plays a crucial role in the teaching-learning process, particularly within teacher education programs. To enhance the overall quality of education, it is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of both instruction and student learning, especially in the context of pre-service teacher training. The primary purpose of school practicum assessments is to evaluate pre-service teachers' (PSTs) competencies in performing teaching-related tasks and to ensure that the practicum experience adheres to high standards of quality, providing students with meaningful and beneficial experiences (Macarthy & Caldwell, 2003). Moreover, assessment serves to identify the strengths and weaknesses of PSTs in order to support the ongoing improvement of their teaching practice. While practicum programs are designed to allow PSTs to apply theoretical knowledge gained at the university in real classroom settings, in many cases the

course content is not fully aligned with their actual teaching assignments. Teachers are expected to possess a broad range of pedagogical skills and content knowledge in addition to their engagement in continual innovation to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. Assessment data therefore sustain policy decisions aimed at improving teacher education. The results of these assessments can be used to distinguish between effective and ineffective practicum models, providing a foundation for continuous improvement and the avoidance of common pitfalls. In line with these goals, the practicum program has also been tailored to adopt a more humanistic approach by incorporating the concept of immediacy.

Immediacy in Teaching Practice

Immediacy, a concept first introduced by Mehrabian and Ferris (1967), refers to instructor behaviors -both verbal and non-verbal- that promote physical and psychological closeness between teachers and students. Research by Ballester (2013) and Liu and Geng (2023) indicates that instructors who demonstrate positive immediacy behaviors are generally more successful in reducing psychological distance, thereby fostering stronger student engagement. Within the practicum context, immediacy is closely linked to increased levels of learning and understanding. This is because lessons with immediate relevance enhance students' personal connection to the material. When students are presented with opportunities to apply their knowledge in contexts that produce tangible, immediate outcomes, they are more likely to engage in deeper reasoning processes and retain what they have learned.

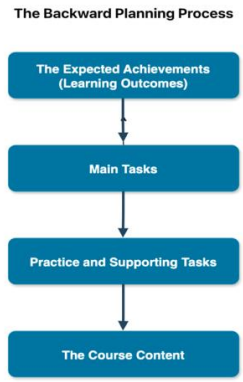
The FTTP Program Context

Recent scholarship has underscored the persistent disconnect between universities and schools, as well as between the theoretical instruction offered in higher education and the day-to-day realities of classroom teaching (Rodríguez et al., 2022; Barends, 2022; Poveda García-Noblejas et al., 2023). Bridging this gap is critical for developing pre-service teachers into reflective, practice-ready professionals who can fluidly navigate between theory and practice. Yet doing so remains a formidable challenge under the structural constraints of most teacher preparation programs. The current FTTP program was developed specifically to address these challenges. Integrating assessment with immediacy-focused strategies, it aims to create a more cohesive, responsive, and effective model of teacher training, one that prepares PSTs not only to teach but to engage, adapt, and lead in today's dynamic educational environments.

Drawing on the Vadmani-Inbar (2022) report prepared for the Council for Higher Education in Israel (CHE), a pioneering pilot initiative titled *From Theory to Praxis* (FTTP) was implemented across all Israeli teacher training institution (CHE, 2022). Whereas earlier practicum models focused primarily on adapting to school demands and teaching traditional subjects, the FTTP program was designed to bridge the gap between core academic content taught at the university and its application in field-based teaching. To that end, the program also introduced a range of assessment tools to evaluate PSTs' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral competencies. The selection of participating educational institutions was customized according to each PST's specialization and training track. This process was collaboratively managed by practicum units, department heads, regional supervisors from the Ministry of Education, and school-based supervisors. Notably, the FTTP program integrates extensive use of digital tools and educational technologies, alongside simulations. While embracing innovation, the program maintains a human-centered philosophy that emphasizes the continuous development of relationships throughout the teaching and learning experience.

Pre-Implementation of the FTTP Program

In order to evaluate the impact of tailored university instruction on the implementation of educational theory and overall teaching quality, the FTTP initiative included a preparatory phase for all teacher-educators. This involved a one-semester professional development lab and workshop prior to program launch in the second semester. The aim was to support multi-dimensional planning, during which lecturers in teaching colleges revised their syllabi to meet FTTP's pedagogical goals and to better align with the specific needs of partner schools. This professional development phase drew heavily on *Phygital Learning*—a blended approach combining physical and digital tools. Lecturers were tasked with assessing 2–4 student products, emphasizing clarity, verifiability, and diversity of task design. They evaluated whether these tasks aligned with desired learning outcomes, avoided redundancy, and addressed a broad range of student needs. This evaluation was informed by a structured planning method known as *Backward Design*.



Also known as goal-based planning, this approach begins with identifying desired learning outcomes and then planning the necessary steps to achieve them (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; 2011). The process enables educators to focus on long-term goals and align instructional strategies and resources accordingly. Within this framework, high-level learning outcomes were prioritized, even at the expense of intermediate steps, and centered on meaningful student accomplishments. Each outcome was then clearly aligned with a main task**,** ensuring coherence and clarity in instructional planning. To support these main tasks, practice and supporting tasks were broken down into smaller, scaffolded activities that guided students progressively toward the intended goals. In terms of course content and demonstration planning, lecturers followed a structured sequence that included practicing demonstrations with colleagues, planning the instructional flow, selecting appropriate materials, anticipating common misconceptions, introducing new content clearly, and ensuring that students had the necessary background knowledge to engage effectively with new concepts.

To validate these strategies, lecturers conducted practice observations using recorded lessons. This allowed them to test and evaluate instruction in a controlled setting. Observation sheets were created with guiding questions and clear evaluation goals. Stages of instructional techniques were defined, and their theoretical foundations, key principles, and common mistakes were identified and discussed. These efforts culminated in refined lesson summaries and more effective teaching strategies. To foster habit formation, the *Four-Stage Fingers Rule* was used for skill development: Knowledge → Motivation → Dry Run → Classroom Implementation

(including reflection and feedback). More importantly, syllabus design did not begin with content. Rather, it began with identifying learning outcomes and built content around them. The syllabus design process also accounted for modes of instruction, venue choices, collaborative partnerships, and tool selection. These components were all integrated into the final course design.

The Implementation Process

During the implementation phase, lecturers ensured alignment between course assignments and the intended learning outcomes. Digital skills taught in the course were converted into practical teaching materials tailored to the specific needs of PSTs and their individual classroom environments. Building on this foundation, lecturers guided PSTs through the development of immersive learning activities, such as escape rooms, that incorporated digital tools introduced throughout the course. PSTs were familiarized with a wide range of tools, including collaborative tools, assessment and evaluation tools, time-management tools, location-based learning tools, activity and engagement tools.

From this toolkit, each PST selected three tools that best matched their classroom context and adapted them for instructional purposes. They then designed a collaborative instructional unit appropriate for their students, created targeted practice and assessment tools to track student progress and produced and implemented these tools in the classroom. This was followed by an experimentation phase, in which PSTs evaluated and reflected on their classroom implementation. These reflections allowed them to revise and refine their approaches based on real-time classroom data and pedagogical insights. As part of their lesson planning, students were encouraged to apply creative strategies such as brainstorming, integrating audio-visual digital tools, and incorporating music. They also used online platforms like FlipGrid**,** Canva**,** Nearpod, NotebookLM, and AI-based video generation tools to develop classroom clues and engagement materials that were both innovative and easy to implement. Unlike other programs, FTTP offers a model for narrowing the theory-practice divide and empowering pre-service teachers to integrate academic knowledge with classroom realities.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do pre-service teachers (PSTs) of English in Israel perceive the newly proposed model for practical experience (FTTP) that integrates academic institutions with school-based teaching?

2. What challenges and benefits do PSTs identify in relation to the FTTP program?

Methodology

A qualitative multiple case study approach was adopted, a methodology particularly suited for exploring professional development, identity, and lived experiences within teacher education (Philipsen et al., 2019). To gain deep insights into participants' experiences, in-depth semi-structured narrative interviews were conducted with each pre-service teacher, following established qualitative research practices (Creswell, 2007). Consistent with the recommendations of Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the interviews began with rapport-building, a clear explanation of the study's purpose, and assurances of confidentiality, including the use of pseudonyms to protect participant identity. All interviews were conducted in English to ensure linguistic authenticity while strictly maintaining participant confidentiality. PSTs were

encouraged to share personal narratives, offer illustrative examples, and reflect on how participation in the FTTP program shaped their perceptions and professional growth. The interviews were not viewed as neutral data collection tools but rather as dialogic spaces in which meaning was co-constructed between interviewer and participant. A structured interview format was maintained across cases to ensure consistency, thereby enhancing the reliability of the analysis while remaining sensitive to each participant's evolving perspectives and lived experiences.

The semi-structured interview protocol addressed six thematic areas aligned with the study's objectives. First, questions focused on the transition from theory to practice, prompting participants to describe how the FTTP program supported or failed to support, the application of theoretical knowledge during practicum experiences. Second, the interviews explored humanistic teaching values, such as empathy and student welfare, by asking how the program influenced participants' approach to these dimensions in the classroom. Third, participants were invited to assess the level of collaboration between academic institutions and schools, particularly the communication and coordination between college lecturers and school mentors. Fourth, the interviews addressed the challenges encountered and coping mechanisms employed by PSTs, encouraging them to reflect on difficulties in implementing university-based learning in practicum settings. Fifth, participants considered the personal impact of the program, reflecting on how the FTTP shaped their teaching identity and skills. Finally, the interviews invited broader reflections, asking PSTs to share insights and lessons from their practicum experiences that could inform teacher training programs on a global scale.

Population and Sampling

This study is part of a broader research project that spans multiple subject areas and geographic regions beyond English education. The current study focused on 19 pre-service teachers (PSTs) enrolled at an academic college of education in Israel. All participants were engaged in 14-week practicum placements across four different schools located in the Central District of the country.

Participants were selected based on two key criteria:

1. They were second-year students participating in practicum placements twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays).

2. One of their courses was designated as part of a pilot program initiated by the Israeli Ministry of Education and applied by Mofet Institute, which included parallel tracks in Hebrew, Arabic, and Mathematics.

The following table provides further details about the participants and the schools where they carried out their practicum training: Natalie, Victoria, Amelia, Sophie, Ben, and Hailey carried out their practicum in *School A*, whereas Sarah, Emily, Zoe, Scarlett, Mandy, Jimmy, Grace, Isabella, Lily, Emma, Carol, and Rachel completed theirs in *School B*. It should be noted that this asymmetric distribution was determined by the availability of and willingness of schools to host PSTs.

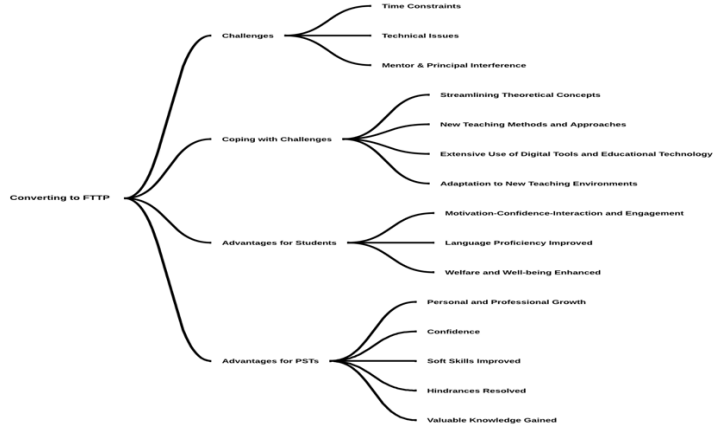
School A	**School B**
Natalie	Sarah
Victoria	Emily
Amelia	Zoe
Sophie	Scarlett

Ben	Mandy
Hailey	Jimmy
	Grace
	Isabella
	Lily
	Emma
	Carol
	Rachel

Data Analysis

For data analysis, we employed Braun et al.'s (2014) six-phase approach to thematic analysis. Initially, each researcher engaged in a thorough reading of the transcribed data, identifying potentially significant elements. We then developed initial codes that captured key features connected to the research question. These codes were methodically applied throughout the dataset, enabling systematic segmentation and categorization. Subsequently, we examined the coded data to identify overarching themes, seeking patterns that revealed deeper insights. The emerging themes were carefully reviewed and mapped back onto the dataset to confirm their alignment with the research question. During this process, themes were refined, merged, divided, or removed as necessary. Once finalized, each theme was defined and named, with a detailed analysis provided. Finally, a comprehensive report was produced, integrating analytical narratives with data excerpts and linking the results to existing literature. The resulting themes reflect the theoretical framework of teacher identity development and the challenges of bridging theory and practice within the FTTP program. The results highlighted a spectrum of PST perspectives on the FTTP program, with participants expressing mixed sentiments regarding its implementation and impact.

Findings and Discussion



The results revealed three main challenges that PSTs encountered: 1) mentor and principal interference, 2) time constraints, 3) technical issues. The first derived from human hindrances while the second and the third resulted from human and non-human hindrances. In addition, the results showed four coping mechanisms utilized by PSTs to facilitate the transition to the FTTP program. While demanding, these mechanisms served as a starting point for addressing the main

challenges that undermined immediacy: 1) rationalizing theoretical concepts, 2) adaptation to new teaching environments, 3) using new teaching methods and approaches, 4) extensive use of digital tools and educational technology. These coping mechanisms yielded beneficial outcomes for both PSTs and students. For PSTs, these included 1) personal and professional growth, 2) increased confidence, 3) development of soft skills, 4) overcoming hindrances, 5) gaining valuable knowledge. More, the impact of FTTP program was significant on students who experienced: 1) heightened motivation and confidence, 2) positive emotions, greater interaction, and engagement, 3) enhanced language proficiency, and 4) improved welfare and well-being. The following paragraphs provide a detailed discussion of the results:

1. The Three Main Challenges

Mentor and Principal Interference

Some mentors and principals resisted the new program due to skepticism, privacy concerns, or a preference for traditional methods. PSTs faced various challenges, including mentor interference and inadequate support and interference from principals (Suryati et al., 2023). Natalie expressed disappointment with her mentor's rejection of most of her ideas, particularly digital activities, making it difficult to implement her proposals. Similarly, Victoria was frustrated by her mentor's lack of support:

My mentor consistently ignored me and failed to provide instructions on teaching methods or guidance for my classes. She often avoided discussing or planning lessons with me. Consequently, I had to rely on myself to acquire the skills I needed, which was disappointing. In addition, during a project with students, we received no assistance from the mentor or the principal, despite their later taking credit for it on their Facebook accounts, which was frustrating.

Amelia emphasized that the "mentor resisted the idea of change, despite being informed by the Ministry of Education about the necessity of cooperation." Sophie too observed a lack of cooperation from the mentor, noting reluctance to veer away from the curriculum and integrate external topics. The latter's primary concern seemed to be enforcing rules and maintaining silence above all else. These experiences underscore the need for mentors to be more open and supportive of innovative teaching approaches. On the contrary, Sarah and Zoe asserted that their mentors appreciated their lesson plans. Sara's mentor even adopted some of her methods in classes where she was not present. The mentor was cooperative and did not add unnecessary challenges to her workload. Fortunately, the former was open-minded and supportive of the new transition, providing constructive feedback and encouragement for improvement. Sarah expressed gratitude for not encountering opposition, unlike some other teachers in different schools who resisted or were reluctant to embrace mid-year changes. Likewise, Emily praised all the staff: "The school felt like a second home to me. Once I entered its doors and saw the smiles of students and teachers, any worries would fade away. The principal generously provided me with all the necessary supplies, from papers and pens to toys for the students."

Time Constraints

PSTs struggled to implement FTTP within a busy teaching schedule, balancing coursework, student teaching, and abruptly scheduled events (Cribbs et al., 2020). Zoe observed that some students needed more time to express their opinions in class discussions. Scarlett noted that unexpected events often required schedule changes. For instance, if a mentor was ill or unavailable, PSTs could not take the class without supervision. Mandy found conducting classes

challenging during events like Arabic/Culture Day, which engaged all students. Jimmy mentioned that delayed decisions and scheduling constraints, such as exams and Ramadan, put mentees under time pressure, hindering lesson plan implementation. Ben and Grace affirmed that unforeseen events, exams, or field trips frequently disrupted their plans, preventing them from implementing lessons as scheduled.

Technical Issues

Some schools lacked sufficient technology resources, such as upgraded computers and internet connectivity, making it challenging to implement digital programs effectively (Wagner et al., 2024). Technical problems like malfunctioning hardware and software glitches disrupted learning activities. Inadequate infrastructure, outdated hardware, and insufficient bandwidth hindered program success (Sharik, 2023). Budget limitations restricted schools' ability to invest in resources, training, and support needed to sustain the program. Sophie noted issues with voice communication and internet connectivity. Mandy mentioned occasional internet challenges. Victoria highlighted the absence of a projector, necessitating lab visits. Hailey claimed the internet was unreliable, and computers shut down unexpectedly. In the face of these obstacles, PSTs attempted to adeptly handle them, primarily through weekly sessions led by their trainer and, crucially, with the guidance of their college lecturer. Despite the obstacles, all PSTs remained committed to student-centered teaching and enhancing engagement and meaningful learning experiences. They found fulfillment in positively impacting student learning and growth. In this respect, emphasizing innovation, immediacy, flexibility, and ongoing improvement, PSTs demonstrated adaptability in addressing unexpected obstacles and meeting diverse student needs. Their strategies included integrating technology, simulations, real-world tasks, and various teaching approaches to bolster student engagement and improve learning outcomes. The results emphasize the transformative potential of student-centered teaching and the importance of support, reflection, and professional development in overcoming challenges and maximizing innovative teaching methods:

1. Rationalizing Theoretical Concepts

Applying theoretical concepts in real-world settings profoundly impacts PSTs' teaching experiences by helping them analyze situations, evaluate evidence, and connect theory to practice (Radović et al., 2021). It enhances problem-solving abilities through authentic challenges and opportunities to propose solutions. One of FTTP's main goals is to simplify abstract ideas, theories, and principles, making them more understandable and applicable. This involves breaking down complex theories for easier classroom handling, preparing PSTs for future challenges and contributing to their professional development. It boosts confidence and improves communication skills (Yin, 2019). Isabella noted that the program enabled her to translate theoretical concepts into practical lesson plans, bridging the gap between theory and practice. For Victoria, the program improved her time management and deepened her passion for teaching, though she emphasized the need for greater school cooperation. Natalie expressed a similar opinion:

There was a prevailing belief among mentors that classes should strictly adhere to a predetermined curriculum, potentially disrupting the established learning environment. Therefore, certain classroom rules limited the execution of some lessons. Despite difficulties due to restrictions on certain activities, I found alternative ways to overcome these obstacles. One of them was employing simulations while simultaneously using the coursebook.

2. Adaptation to New Teaching Environments

Having acquired the skills to effectively accommodate various classroom settings and address diverse student requirements, PSTs demonstrated increased innovation and adaptability in their teaching methods, such as simulations and spin wheels. Although Scarlett identified the main challenge as adapting theoretical material from the course to the school setting, she successfully adjusted her teaching approach by incorporating resourceful activities and unconventional exercises. Similarly, Amelia encountered difficulty in quickly adapting to changes; nevertheless, she addressed this by encouraging student participation and devising new plans and strategies using digital tools, videos, and songs. As a result, she observed positive changes as all students participated and enjoyed the lessons. Hailey recounted her experience with excitement:

This program taught me to adjust my language for different audiences and situations, benefiting both my personal and professional life. I've learned to accommodate my language to students' diverse proficiency levels. Moving ahead, I plan to apply these lessons to support every student in reaching their potential. This experience has not only enhanced my students' communication skills but also my own.

3. Using New Teaching Methods and Approaches

Lily introduced songs as a novel warm-up activity, providing students with a unique experience. The lesson proceeded smoothly, exposing students to real-life situations. Ben observed that most students enjoyed innovative methods and acquired new skills, though a minority preferred textbook-based instruction. Understanding this feedback, he balanced his innovative approaches with the textbook to ensure all students could learn effectively. Mandy's experience differed as she implemented innovative teaching techniques to enhance class engagement and participation:

I used random sorting to organize students into teams, finding it an efficient method that allowed me to focus on important details beyond traditional lecture content. This led to maximized participation, with students showing genuine interest and even approaching me with questions during recess, a significant improvement from the previous semester.

4. Extensive Use of Digital Tools and Educational Technology

Integrating digital tools and technology into teaching offers numerous advantages but also presents challenges. It provides opportunities for creative use of technology to improve learning outcomes (Harefa & Purba, 2019; Moran et al., 2023). Lily successfully integrated gamification (Kahoot) into her lessons, making them more interactive and engaging. She adjusted her approach based on students' grade levels and preferences, highlighting the importance of tailoring lesson plans. This experience helped Lily refine her teaching methods and better understand students' needs and interests. Grace noted that the activities in the lesson plan enabled trainees to apply their knowledge, develop skills, and reflect on topics using digital tools. Her lessons empowered students to express themselves, develop critical thinking skills, and prepare for their digital lives. Mandy had a similar experience employing digital tools:

Teaching this semester was emotionally fulfilling. Discovering the power of digital tools in education has inspired me to integrate them into my future lessons. Encouraging students to practice language skills and effective communication felt rewarding. As they left the classroom, I felt proud of their cooperation and progress.

Amelia deliberated before speaking, eventually remarking that in one of her lessons some students were reluctant to the homework assignment. However, their enthusiasm soared when

they discovered it involved utilizing digital tools recording videos. Eager to learn the topic, they displayed a keen interest. Jimmy said he was proud of himself:

I assessed students' understanding and engagement by evaluating their in-class work quality and responses to tasks. Rubrics and checklists helped assess their multimedia use, organization, and overall video effectiveness. Positive reactions from students created a friendly and welcoming learning digital environment, making lessons enjoyable and necessary, particularly in the era of dominant social media.

It is noteworthy that the FTTP program had a significantly positive impact on both PSTs and some of their mentors. The following paragraphs will outline the benefits of the program, which, if adopted by other higher education institutions, could yield similar outcomes:

1. Personal Growth and Resilience

PSTs reflected on their personal and professional growth, emphasizing self-reliance, flexibility, and continuous improvement in education (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022; Lim et al., 2024). They expressed hopes for a better future in education, highlighting the program's role in enhancing teaching skills and preparing for challenges. Sarah, Emily, Lily, and Rachel acknowledged both successes and challenges during the program's implementation. They provided insights into lesson effectiveness, adjustments based on student feedback, strategies for improvement, and demonstrated professional growth. They also expressed gratitude for support from colleagues and mentors. Natalie mentioned the program's significant benefits for her personal growth and teaching perspective: "*First, it improved my engagement and later enabled me to teach students compelling and unconventional subjects. I found the program intriguing, and I thoroughly enjoyed it and would gladly recommend it to every prac teacher.*"

2. Increased Confidence

Newly adapted technology-oriented programs boost confidence of PSTs. (Smith, 2021). Emily shared her own output underscoring the difference between the second semester and the previous one:

At first, I doubted my progress and ability to earn students' respect and love. However, implementing the new program's topics and activities proved helpful. Students responded positively, showing interest and engagement. This experience increased my confidence and developed my teaching skills.

3. Development of Soft Skills

Applying theories in practical settings helps students develop problem-solving skills and leadership by presenting them with authentic challenges and opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge to propose solutions (Idarraga and Romero, 2024). Along these lines, practical application helped PSTs develop their soft skills alongside their effective problem-solving skills and leadership. Hailey maintained: "*The program polished my leadership abilities. As a PST, I was able to lead by example and inspire my students to become leaders as well. I definitely inspired them to strive for excellence in their language skills.*" Similarly, Emma portrayed how the shift was phenomenal and developed her organizational and leadership skills. Scarlett and Victoria emphasized how the program helped them develop their adaptability, problem-solving abilities, emotional intelligences, time management, and leadership skills.

4. Overcoming Hindrances

PSTs learned to address diverse classroom contexts, student needs, and instructional challenges (Ribay, 2024). Carol was skeptical at first but sooner she was able to see how the program was extremely productive: "*The difficulty was in applying the theory in class at first but after one lesson I could navigate through all the challenges as I learned to manage time wisely and convince the mentor with my ideas.*" Jenny shared a similar sentiment, stating that while the sudden change in the syllabus raised concerns, effective management and cooperation from the mentor alleviated these worries. It is evident that the mentor had a prominent role in attaining successful results of the program.

5. Gaining Valuable Knowledge

The program provided PSTs with valuable knowledge for improving teaching practices and lesson content (Lavonen et al., 2023). Despite the setbacks, Jenny, Victoria, Scarlett, Mandy, Hailey, Isabella, and Sophie expressed satisfaction with their teaching experiences and a sense of fulfillment in making a positive impact on students' learning and growth. They recognized the importance of student-centered teaching, engagement, and advanced a supportive learning environment, and they remained committed to improving their teaching strategies and contributing to the field of education. In this respect, Hailey said:

I gained invaluable experience teaching diverse students, refining my methods and triggering active participation. Witnessing the students' progress filled me with pride, and despite preliminary concerns about changes, I feel equipped for a successful career in education. The modifications and alterations we made were advantageous for the students.

The FTTP introduced positive outcomes not only to PSTs, but to students as well:

1. Heightened Motivation and Confidence

Effective practicum application can lead to improved student motivation and learning outcomes (Harefa & Purba, 2019). It stimulates students and encourages them to become lifelong learners by demonstrating the relevance and value of academic knowledge beyond the classroom. Sophie said the students liked this kind of merging of the lessons into the English language classes and their motivation was very dominant. Grace recounted a similar experience:

Overall, the students were engaged and motivated and were able to apply what they learned in real-world contexts outside of the classroom. You feel that you achieved the operative can-do statements, which are clear and actionable expressions that outline what an individual is capable of doing.

Furthermore, applying theoretical knowledge in technology-driven practical settings boost students' confidence in their abilities and understanding of the subject matter (Haleem et al., 2022). Hailey underscored this point:

As a trainee, I witnessed significant growth in my students' language skills throughout the second semester. It was incredibly rewarding to see them improve and gain confidence in their abilities. Indeed, using the program was a great experience that allowed my students to express themselves in new and exciting ways.

2. Positive Emotions, Greater Interaction and Engagement

Emotions elicit greater interaction and increase student engagement (Rowe et al., 2023). All PSTs reported positive student responses, indicating high levels of engagement and interest. Students actively participated in discussions, activities, and games, showing enthusiasm for the

topics. PSTs noted students' curiosity and eagerness to learn, especially with new or unconventional topics. PSTs emphasized engaging students through innovative methods such as Flipgrid videos, discussions on societal issues, and activities like role-playing and group work. They highlighted instances of student enthusiasm, creativity, and improvement in language and communication skills as a result. Smit et al. (2021) and Scott and Rohde (2024) maintain that hands-on experiences are essential for developing competence and meeting needs. Teaching through application encouraged active engagement as students participated in hands-on activities, discussions, and projects that required them to apply theoretical knowledge. This approach enabled PSTs to integrate various theories and concepts into a cohesive framework, fostering interdisciplinary thinking. Jenny provided an example where the lesson content stirred strong emotions, leading to open sharing of insecurities and supportive interactions:

Students said that these lessons were fun, particularly as they took on the roles of interviewer and interviewee. It provided them with insights into themselves, their peers, and the nature of job interviews. Introducing this shift was a refreshing change of pace for them, and I was impressed by the depth of their engagement, as evidenced by their deep questions during the simulations. Overall, teaching these subjects were both simple and enjoyable.

In this context, during her eighth-grade lesson on selfies, Emma facilitated an interactive session, adapting her approach to varying student attitudes. In another lesson on beauty standards, time constraints impacted activities, but students valued the emotional engagement. Isabella's lessons saw high interactivity, with students engaging openly in discussions and expressing opinions without inhibition, despite differences.

3. Enhanced Language Proficiency

All PSTs emphasized the importance of engaging students through innovative methods such as Flipgrid videos, NoteboolLM annotation, societal issue discussions, role-playing, and group work. They underscored student enthusiasm, creativity, and improvements in language and communication skills. Sarah, Emily, Lily, and Rachel emphasized catering to individual student needs, respecting boundaries, and adapting activities for different grade levels. They employed strategies to address challenges like low self-esteem, language barriers, reluctance toward tasks or general discomfort, creating inclusive environments where all students felt valued and supported. Despite initial apprehensions, they observed significant improvements in students' language proficiency and critical thinking skills. Positive feedback from students and mentors indicated the lessons were effective, fostering a supportive learning environment. All PSTs expressed satisfaction with student progress and their own development as educators. Natalie confirmed this:

Most lessons went exactly as planned, the students clearly interacted and expressed their opinion openly and creatively. Even students who did not prefer to talk during the lessons, took part in this dialogue. The program enhanced their ability to speak and develop their language.

4. Improved Welfare and Well-being

The FTTP program emphasized inclusivity and equity, challenging PSTs to consider diverse student needs, demands, backgrounds, and experiences. It promoted a student-centered approach, prioritizing students' interests, and well-being (Megawati et al., 2022). PSTs were encouraged to view each student as an individual with unique strengths and potential, nurturing personal connections. Sarah underscored this approach's effectiveness in building relationships and enhancing learning:

Through the FTTP program, I underwent a transformative experience that not only improved my teaching skills but also instilled within me a thoughtful appreciation for the human dimension of education. I centered my teaching practices around the unique needs and well-being of each student, creating inclusive classrooms where diversity was celebrated, and every voice was heard.

Summary and Conclusion

With the growing number of teachers in schools in Israel (Khalaily et al., 2023), this study aimed to propose and examine a new model for practical experience within academic institutions and school-based teaching, as well as to explore how pre-service teachers (PSTs) of English perceive this model. While some PSTs found the integration of theory and practice enriching, others encountered challenges in adapting to the real-world demands of teaching. This complexity underscores the need for continued refinement of teacher training programs to enhance their effectiveness in preparing future educators.

One significant finding of the study, as revealed through students' reflections, was the contrast between the two practicum schools in terms of preparedness and openness to innovation. *School A* was reported to be less equipped in terms of technological infrastructure, with limited access to digital tools and unreliable internet connectivity. Moreover, the school's principal and mentors appeared resistant to pedagogical change, often favoring traditional methods and showing reluctance to accommodate the evolving needs of pre-service teachers participating in the FTTP program. In contrast, *School B* demonstrated a more supportive and adaptable environment. It was described as being more organized, technologically prepared, and open to student-centered approaches. Participants noted that mentors and school leadership in *School B* were more receptive to new teaching strategies and encouraged creative lesson planning. This stark contrast highlights the critical role of institutional readiness and staff mindset in shaping the success of innovative practicum models like FTTP. Despite this setback and numerous other challenges, the findings showed that the FTTP program promoted a thoughtful and student-centered approach to teaching, one characterized by innovation and a commitment to addressing the diverse needs of learners. In addition, the experiences shared by PSTs highlighted the transformative potential of engaging, inclusive, flexible, and well-designed lesson plans in facilitating meaningful learning experiences.

Espousing a humanistic approach that values social justice and strives to create inclusive learning environments where all students are respected and empowered to succeed, the program encouraged PSTs to advocate for the welfare and well-being of every student. It encouraged their reflective practice involving self-awareness and a commitment to continuous improvement. Through such activities including peer feedback, discussions with mentors, trainers, and the university lecturer who delivered the course, PSTs had opportunities to reflect on their beliefs and teaching practices, deepening their understanding of themselves and their identities as educators. Moreover, the program integrated social and emotional learning (SEL) principles into the practicum, emphasizing their role in nurturing students' social and emotional well-being alongside academic achievement. PSTs also reflected on personal growth and learning from their teaching experiences, acknowledging the importance of self-reliance, flexibility, and continuous improvement in the field of education. They expressed hopes for a better future in education, emphasizing the collaboration between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This collaboration was often facilitated by educational frameworks that balance classroom instruction with hands-on experience in school environments (Vidal Raméntol, 2019; Bullivant, 2022).

Based on these findings, institutions and the Ministry of Education should provide targeted training for school mentors and principals to enhance openness toward pedagogical innovation and improve collaboration with PSTs, in addition to aligning expectations with the goals of the FTTP program.

Along these lines, establishing clear communication channels and facilitating joint planning sessions among mentors, lecturers, and PSTs can help reduce resistance and build mutual trust. In addition, practicum schedules should include structured time for reflection, lesson planning, and debriefing with mentors or instructors, allowing PSTs to integrate theory into practice more effectively and engage more meaningfully with students. Moreover, strengthening schools' technological infrastructure, including reliable digital tools and internet connectivity, is essential for the successful implementation of FTTP-related activities. This should be accompanied by training in educational technology for both PSTs and mentors to guarantee equitable and effective use across school settings. Indeed, teacher education programs should continue to promote humanistic, student-centered teaching by emphasizing empathy, immediacy, and emotional well-being. Furthermore, institutions must provide systematic support mechanisms, such as mentoring, peer networks, and reflective journals, that help PSTs navigate challenges and develop confidence. Recognizing their professional growth throughout the practicum experience can enhance motivation and long-term commitment to the teaching profession. In this regard, PSTs should be encouraged to adapt lessons to their students' needs while drawing from personal, cultural, and social contexts, and mentors should be sensitized to the value of student-centered pedagogy.

Study Limitations

While this study provides rich and narrative insights into the experiences of 19 pre-service English teachers in Israel engaged in the FTTP program, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size and selection are limited to one academic institution and two schools within the Central District. This may constrain the generalizability of the findings to broader national or international contexts. Second, despite attempts to maintain trust and cultural-linguistic authenticity by conducting the interviews in English, some nuances or meanings may have been subtly lost during analysis, given that all PSTs were native speakers of Arabic. Finally, the study's qualitative narrative approach, while suitable for depth, does not capture quantitative measures of impact, such as student achievement or long-term teacher retention. These limitations suggest the need for longitudinal, multi-site, and mixed-method research to further validate and expand upon the findings presented here.

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